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Autocratic Ethnofederalism and Regime Change

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Political Science

by

Adam Brooks Fefer

Committee in charge:

  Professor Stephan Haggard, Co-Chair
  Professor Philip G. Roeder, Co-Chair
  Professor Claire Adida
  Professor Jesse Driscoll

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The Dissertation of Adam Brooks Fefer is approved, and it is acceptable in quality
and form for publication on microfilm and electronically.

University of California San Diego

2023

DEDICATION

To the memory of my mother, who showed me unconditional love and encouraged my education. And to the peoples of Ethiopia, who deserve a future of democracy, peace, and recognition.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

VITA

2014	Associate of Arts in Political Science, Santa Barbara City College
2016	Bachelors of Arts in Political Science with *High Honors*, University of California, Berkeley
2019	Master of Arts in Political Science, University of California San Diego
2023	Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science, University of California San Diego

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Autocratic Ethnofederalism and Regime Change

by

Adam Brooks Fefer

Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science

University of California San Diego, 2023

Professor Stephan Haggard, Co-Chair
Professor Philip G. Roeder, Co-Chair

This dissertation is about democratic change in "autocratic ethnofederations" (AEFs) with a focus on Ethiopia. AEFs are autocracies where the state governments are ethnic homelands. For example, Pakistan's Punjab province is the home of Punjabi speakers. Billions of people have lived in the current and defunct AEFs, including India, Yugoslavia, and Malaysia. AEF has been a conspicuous institution in several democratic transitions, like the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia in 1990. In other cases –like Pakistan's 20th century military dictatorships– AEF leaders autocratized, repressing opponents and cancelling elections.

An important share of AEF regime changes can be understood as responses to crises, like

mass protests. I ask: When might autocrats respond to crises with authoritarian repression or democratic concessions? I theorize the importance of different combinations of 'centralization' and 'ethnic exclusion.' In centralized and exclusive AEFs, power is concentrated in the autocrat's federal government, which is dominated by one ethnic group. This combination of strength and ethnic unity enables autocrats to respond to crises with repression. By contrast, in decentralized and inclusive AEFs, the federal government is weak and ethnically fractured, disabling effective repression. As the crisis intensifies without a resolution, autocrats will be compelled to make democratic concessions.

I find preliminary cross-national support for the theory. In 100% of the decentralized, inclusive AEFs that faced crises prior to regime change, incumbents democratized. And in 81% of the centralized, exclusive AEFs that faced crises prior to regime change, incumbents autocratized. However, more is required to show that autocrats' responses were actually affected by different combinations of centralization and exclusion.

Finally, I conduct three case studies of Ethiopia, an AEF that autocratized in 2005 and 2019 and partially democratized in 2018. The cases illustrate how Ethiopia's democratic trajectory has been shaped by different combinations of centralization and exclusion since the fall of the *Derg*. The case studies are corroborated by interviews with Ethiopian elites, which show that elite behavior was consistent with the case study conclusions. My findings have implications for international democracy promotion, which could strive to deepen both decentralization and ethnic inclusion in AEFs like Ethiopia.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1   Question and Motivation

This dissertation is about democratic change in countries that are both authoritarian and ethnofederal, with a focus on Ethiopia. Autocratic ethnofederations (AEFs) are (a) regimes either without elections or without free and fair elections and (b) federations where the sub-national governments (or states, republics, provinces, etc.) are ethnic homelands.[1] For example, the Soviet Union was an autocracy with 15 ethnically-defined Union Republics like Azerbaijan, home of Azeri speakers. Pakistan is an autocracy with four ethnically-defined provinces like Sindh, home of Sindhi speakers.

In some cases, autocratic ethnofederations have democratized. Important examples include the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia in 1990. In fact, 63% of all AEF regime changes have been in the direction of more democratic rule. Yet in other cases, leaders have managed to make the system more autocratic, repressing opponents and consolidating power. Some 20th century examples include the end of civilian rule in Pakistan after General Zia-ul-Haq's coup in 1977 and the end of Nigeria's "Second Republic" in 1983. Are there features of AEF that make it harder for autocrats to resist democratizing pressures? How might the institutions of AEF be designed so as to encourage democratic transitions and prevent

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[1] I conceptualize ethnicity as an "ascriptive" tie, where individuals are co-ethnics if they believe themselves to be tied together by language, religion, tribe, race, history, etc. (Fearon & Laitin 2000).

authoritarian backlash?

In addition to its cross-national, generalizing ambitions, this dissertation focuses intensively on democratic change in Ethiopia, which implemented AEF in 1991. Ethiopia has been an autocracy for its entire history, this in spite of the incremental democratic changes I examine below. At many key moments, Ethiopian monarchs, junta leaders, and revolutionaries could have democratized but instead autocratized. Ethiopia's 2018 democratizing changes –many of which were undertaken by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Abiy Ahmed– seemed remarkably different. But they were followed by autocratizing reversals, which culminated in the 2020-22 Tigray War, one of this century's deadliest wars. I provide a general framework to explain these hopeful and then lamentable outcomes, in order to understand the features of AEF that enable and prevent democratic transitions. The cross-national chapter provides an explanation, but closer analyses are necessary to reveal whether it can make sense of actual case sequences.

Scholars have studied ethnofederalism in much detail, asking whether it successfully appeases aggrieved ethnic groups, affords groups institutional "weapons" (e.g., sub-national police) that encourage secession, and whether it institutionalizes or "freezes" ethnic identities in place, thus perpetuating ethnic conflict (Bunce 1999, Hechter 2000, McGarry & O'Leary 2005). We know quite a bit about why ethnofederations are distinctive from non-ethnic federations. By contrast, this dissertation focuses on specifically *autocratic* ethnofederations.

In addition, scholars have asked why some ethnofederations have been prone to state collapse, usually defined in terms of secession or re-centralization that establishes unitary governance (McGarry & O'Leary 2009, Roeder 2009). This is an important research agenda for explaining monumental events like the USSR's breakup or East Pakistan's secession. By contrast, this dissertation asks why AEFs sometimes democratize or autocratize. Given AEFs' key position in world politics, it is important to understand how their citizens might achieve a more democratic future. This is especially urgent as only seven AEF countries have ever crossed V-Dem's "electoral democracy" threshold (Maerz et al. 2021). Two of these (India and Russia) were followed by reversions to autocracy and two others (Czechoslovakia and

Serbia-Montenegro) by state collapse.

Autocratic ethnofederalism deserves our attention for at least three reasons. First, AEFs are distinctive in their origins, purposes, and functions. AEFs tend to originate in polities with histories of unitary rule and ethnic domination (Anderson 2012). In these situations, aggrieved ethnic groups demand recognition and a share of power. AEF is an approach –arguably perfected by the Soviet Union, and then emulated by countries like Ethiopia– by which autocrats respond to such demands (Connor 1984, Grigoryan 2012, McGarry 2018). It functions to appease ethnic groups by affording them federal autonomy, as well as by co-opting them into the autocrat's regime. However, it does all of this without fundamentally undermining the autocrat's control over the state.

A second reason to study AEFs is that they occupy a key position in world politics. Almost two billion people live in the 5 current AEFs: India, Pakistan, Russia, Ethiopia, and Malaysia. The defunct AEFs were also extremely populous, including the USSR, Yugoslavia, and Burma. The 15 current and defunct AEFs have existed for over 500 cumulative country-years.

Many AEFs have struggled with ethnic conflict, civil wars, military coups, and secessionist violence (Leff 1999, Suberu 2009, Adeney 2016). Examples include Nigeria's Biafran War, Pakistan's four military coups since independence, and the Yugoslav Wars. This is not to claim that the institutions of AEF have caused these outcomes. However, they may not be wholly unrelated. For example, as I argue in chapter 5, Ethiopia's 2020-22 Tigray War can be traced to efforts by national incumbents to create a more centralized and ethnically exclusive AEF. These efforts provoked ethnic Tigrayan politicians, who defied the national government by holding elections during COVID-19. This sequence –which ultimately led to warfare– was closely related to the dynamics of AEF. In other words, it seems irreducible to problems of ineffective, authoritarian governance.

A third reason to study autocratic ethnofederalism is that its core political dynamics or conflicts are distinctive. These conflicts –often fought over the decentralization of political power and ethnic representation– are muted or absent in other kinds of polities, like democratic

ethnofederations, non-ethnic federal autocracies, and unitary autocracies. In democratic eth-nofederations, conflicts over the division of federal powers can arguably be managed through free and fair elections. Imagine how different Canada –a democratic ethnofederation– would be if Ottawans could abrogate Quebec's autonomy and Quebecois could not freely remove Ottawan incumbents (Watts 2000). In both non-ethnic federal autocracies (e.g., Venezuela) and unitary autocracies (e.g., China), conflicts over ethnic representation and inclusion tend to be less salient. By contrast, in AEFs, these conflicts are especially salient. This is because aggrieved ethnic groups typically demand autonomy and ethnic representation in exchange for remaining in the "common state" (Weeks 2013, Roeder 2018).

The distinctiveness of AEF has implications for our understanding of regime change. Under AEF, ethno-national actors tend to play an outsized role during democratic transitions. Existing models from the democratization literature –like those based on class or ideology– thus appear simplistic or irrelevant for our purposes.

To see this, consider just three important explanatory factors: levels of economic devel-opment, inequality, and ethnic diversity (Przeworski et al. 2000, Acemoglu & Robinson 2001, Fish & Brooks 2005).[2] These factors do not point to clear patterns, at least when examining the 5 existing AEFs. Considering just economic development, Table 1.1 shows that Ethiopia is about half as wealthy as Pakistan, one third as wealthy as India, and one tenth as wealthy as both Russia and Malaysia. Yet all five of these countries have undergone noticeable autocratization episodes in the past five years: Ethiopia and Malaysia after internationally acclaimed democratization episodes in 2018, Pakistan as the military continues to undermine liberal freedoms, India as Hindu nationalism strengthens its grip on state power, and Russia as critics of the Russo-Ukraine War are silenced (Papada et al. 2023). Inequality and ethnic diversity seem similarly simplistic for our purposes.

These stark differences among AEFs do not neatly map onto regime change outcomes.

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[2]Other theorized causes of regime change include economic crises, international pressure, (un)supportive political cultures, the presence of post-war pacts, as well as mobilization by ethnic, class, or civil society actors (Haggard & Kaufman 2018, Gleditsch & Ward 2006, Inglehart & Welzel 2003, Bunce 2000, Beissinger 2008).

Table 1.1. Three common regime change indicators. Development, inequality, and ethnic diversity in the five current autocratic ethnofederations. Source: IMF, World Bank, & Fearon (2003).

Country	GDP Per Capita	Gini Index	Ethnic Fractionalization
Ethiopia	$925 (168st/192 countries)	35 % (98/192)	.72 (33/192)
India	$2,257 (143/192)	36 % (91/192)	.42 (99/192)
Malaysia	$11,109 (63/192)	41 % (50/192)	.59 (66/192)
Pakistan	$1,505 (157/192)	30 % (144/192)	.71 (37/192)
Russia	$31,967 (55/192)	36 % (87/192)	.25 (133/192)

This directs us to theorize the role of core dynamics under AEF like the devolution of federal powers to sub-national governments and ethnic representation in the federal government. My theoretical approach affirms Lindberg et al. (2018, 1), for whom the aforementioned approaches "seem to have forgotten a fundamental insight...that [regime change] involves complex processes in which many factors interact in long chains of relationships with uncertain outcomes." Although my theory aims to minimize the number of relevant factors and relationships, I try to preserve the focus on dynamic sequences of events (Capoccia & Ziblatt 2010).

1.2 Theory

My theory –diagrammed in Figure 1.1– begins from the observation that many AEF regime changes have occurred after serious 'crises,' like mass protests or legislative gridlock. AEF regime changes have occurred without prior crises, e.g., in the face of international pressure to hold elections. And crises may be resolved without democratization or autocratization, e.g., via economic redistribution. But an important share of AEF regime changes seem to have been motivated by crises. I provide an inductive explanation for why AEF leaders respond to crises with authoritarian repression or democratic concessions.

I hypothesize that different combinations of 'centralization' and 'ethnic exclusion' affect

incumbents' responses to crises. If the AEF in question is centralized and exclusive, incumbents in the national government are better able to resist pressures to democratize. By contrast, when AEFs are decentralized and inclusive of many ethnic groups, incumbents are weaker, more indecisive, and more likely to make democratic concessions in order to resolve a crisis.

I make an "AND" argument about the conjunction or combination of two factors, centralization AND exclusion. Different combinations change the probability that incumbents can effectively resolve crises via repression. I briefly define some key terms before explaining how these are linked to regime change.

Institutional Structure	**Centralization**: National incumbents are strong, unobstructed by subnational defiance.	**Decentralization**: National incumbents are weak, obstructed by subnational defiance.
	Ethnic Exclusion: National incumbents are decisive, unobstructed by ethnic factionalism.	**Ethnic Inclusion**: National incumbents are indecisive, obstructed by ethnic factionalism.
	⬇	⬇
Response to Crisis (e.g., mass protests)	**Autocratization**: National incumbents quickly resolve crisis via repression.	**Democratization:** National incumbents too weak to implement or agree upon resolution. Crisis intensifies, prompting democratic concessions.

Figure 1.1. Explaining regime change in autocratic ethnofederations.

'Centralized' autocratic ethnofederations feature strong national governments, like the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin. 'Decentralized' AEFs feature weak national governments, like Russia immediately after the fall of the Soviet Union. 'Ethnically exclusive' AEFs feature national governments (or national ruling parties, militaries, politburos, etc.) that are dominated by one ethnic group, like Punjabis in Pakistan. And 'ethnically inclusive' AEFs feature national governments that are controlled by many different ethnic groups. For example, after Josip Tito

began purging Serb incumbents in 1966, power in Yugoslavia's AEF was shared more equally between Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks. Finally, 'crises' are events that challenge the national government's legitimacy or control over the state. Examples include economic crises, mass protests, or civil wars.

My key explanatory factors are highly correlated: AEFs tend to either be centralized and exclusive or decentralized and inclusive. This simplifies our theoretical task to these two combinations. (I do not have strong predictions for the "off-diagonal" cases —centralized-inclusive and decentralized-exclusive– but there have only been two such empirical cases. Chapter 2 explains these cases in more detail.)

First consider AEFs that are centralized and exclusive. Centralization strengthens the national government, which monopolizes important policy domains like security and taxation. Similarly, exclusion renders the national government decisive and unified, freeing it from inter-ethnic disagreement and indecision. Facing a crisis, national government incumbents are strong and decisive enough to respond by consolidating power and autocratizing, repressing protesters, manipulating elections in their favor, and clamping down on independent news media. Malaysia's 1969 autocratization exemplifies this theoretical sequence. Malaysia's national government and Alliance Party ruling coalition were centralized and exclusive in their control by ethnic *Bumiputeras* during the 1960s (Ostwald 2017). The 1969 Sino-Malay riots, which seriously challenged the national government and ruling coalition, were met with repression and imprisonment of dissidents. My argument is that the centralization and exclusion enabled Malaysian national incumbents to respond to this crisis by autocratizing.

Next consider AEFs that are decentralized and inclusive. In these systems, decentralization renders the national government weaker and more reliant upon sub-national governments. The latter must provide security assistance and tax revenues in order to resolve crises. Similarly, ethnic inclusion renders the national government more reliant on inter-ethnic bargaining. This creates the potential for ethnic factionalism, which may necessitate compromises and concessions to preserve the autocratic regime. During a crisis, national incumbents are too

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weak and indecisive to respond by autocratizing. Authority is fractured, both between national and sub-national governments and between different ethnic elites in the national government. This will tend to prolong and intensify the crisis. National incumbents may become desperate enough to respond by ceding power and introducing democratic reforms: scaling back repression, legalizing opposition parties, and releasing dissidents from prison. Autocrats hope that these democratic concessions appease their opponents and resolve the crisis. The Soviet Union's 1990 liberalization exemplifies this sequence: Gorbachev's *perestroika* and *glasnost* reforms beginning in 1985 both decentralized power away from Moscow and furthered the inclusion of non-Russians (Beissinger 2002). Mass protests in 1989 seriously challenged national government incumbents in Moscow, to which they responded by liberalizing. My argument is that decentralization and inclusion disabled Soviet national incumbents from resolving this crisis with authoritarian repression.

1.3   Research Design and Findings

My research involves two parts, each designed to assess a different aspect of the theory. Part 1 is cross-national and exploratory, attempting to find patterns that corroborate the theory. Part 2 is Ethiopia-specific, attempting show how the theory is borne out in actual case sequences. The three Ethiopia case studies are supplemented by original interview data, which show that the case study conclusions are borne out in Ethiopian elite decision-making.

Part 1: Cross-National Analysis

Part 1 analyzes the universe of AEFs since 1922. AEF has spanned three continents: Europe (USSR, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia-Montenegro), Africa (Cameroon, Ethiopia, Nigeria), and Asia (India, Pakistan, Malaysia, Burma, Indonesia). All of these have been large and regionally –if not globally– significant countries: excepting Bosnia and Herzegovina, none has had a population smaller than 5 million. The largest number of AEFs (6) were formed in the 1960s, most of these colonial impositions. The second largest

number (4) were formed after the Cold War, three of these a proposed solution to ethnic conflict and violence. For various reasons, some countries have been AEFs multiple times. For example, Pakistan's first AEF lasted until East Pakistan's secession in 1971 and its second AEF is still intact.

To see whether different combinations of centralization and ethnic exclusion have affected incumbents' responses to crises, I first create a data set of AEFs. Each AEF is coded according to whether it was centralized or decentralized and exclusive or inclusive, whether it autocratized or democratized, and whether each regime change was preceded by a serious crisis. I use a variety of sources, including the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) data set, the Ethnic Power Relations data set, and the rich case study literature. This coding exercise helps circumscribe the universe of cases, omitting those where regime changes did not occur or where regime changes were not preceded by crises.

The cross-national analysis does not help us identify causal relationships but rather helps us ascertain patterns. And the patterns that emerge offer preliminary support for my theory. On the one hand, in 100% (4/4 cases) of the decentralized and inclusive AEFs that faced crises, incumbents responded with democratic concessions. This includes historically significant regime changes, like the 1990 democratizations in the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia that followed the 1989 Revolution crises. Decentralization and inclusion appear to have prevented national incumbents from resolving the crisis via authoritarian repression. Despite this preliminary support, the small number of cases demands more in-depth analysis.

Meanwhile, centralization and ethnic exclusion seem to have enabled autocrats to resist democratizing pressures. Indeed, in 81% (13/16 cases) of the centralized, exclusive AEFs that faced crises, incumbents autocratized. This includes significant autocratization episodes like the military coups in Burma in 1962 (preceded by secessionist threats), Nigeria in 1983 (preceded by legislative gridlock), and Pakistan in 1978 (preceded by inter-communal violence).

Despite this preliminary support for the general theory, there is a worry about the part 1 analysis: it remains unclear that autocrats' responses to crises were actually affected by

different combinations of centralization and ethnic exclusion. In other words, what is needed is a description of the exact sequences of events and decisions preceding regime changes (Pierson 2000). Have decentralized, inclusive institutions plausibly constrained national autocrats when the latter decided how to respond to crises? Have centralized, exclusive institutions empowered them?

To illustrate this worry, consider Bosnia and Herzegovina's (BiH) 1996 democratization. It is true that in the lead-up to 1996, BiH had become more decentralized and inclusive of Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks. It is also true that BiH national incumbents were challenged by an economic crisis stemming from the aftermath of the Bosnian War. That they responded with democratization seems to render BiH a "confirming" case. But perhaps BiH's democratization sequence is explained not by the institutions of AEF, but by something else. One candidate explanation is that BiH democratized because international actors imposed democratic institutions in order to manage the post-war situation (Keil 2016). Which sequence of events actually brought about democratization?

Part 2: Ethiopia Case Studies

Part 2 aims to remedy the part 1 worry by conducting three extensive case studies of Ethiopia, an AEF that autocratized in 2005 and 2019 and liberalized in 2018. The aim here is to provide evidence –in a way that is sensitive to Ethiopian history– that different combinations of centralization and ethnic exclusion were plausibly linked to these three regime change outcomes. The Ethiopia cases are not "easy cases" for the theory. Indeed, Ethiopian politics has always been inhospitable to democracy. Its 2018 democratic reforms were both surprising and short-lived.

The case studies strengthen my analysis in several ways. First, they help enrich the theory by making each theoretical component more concrete. For example, I analyze Ethiopia's many sources of de jure and de facto centralization, the aspects of different crises that were especially threatening, and incumbents' various opportunities and constraints during crisis periods.

A second strength of the case studies is to hold constant those factors (e.g., development,

demography, prior colonization) that complicate cross-national analysis. All three cases occur in Ethiopia, which ensures the units of comparison are similar. Differences across AEFs will affect not only the conclusions one draws but also the meanings of key theoretical concepts. For example, the meaning of a "crisis" in 21st century Ethiopia may differ considerably from that of 1960s Malaysia.

Finally, the cases help guard against "selection bias," as I analyze both autocratizing and democratizing outcomes. To see this, suppose we focused solely on autocratizing outcomes. Such a one-sided focus risks identifying as important those factors that were also present during democratizing outcomes.

Each case study draws on more fine-grained data sources, including cabinet ethnicity data, disaggregated democracy data, survey data, elite social media statements, and political party manifestos and statements. Comparing these cases helps support the general observations from part 1. I summarize each case below, which are diagrammed in Figure 1.2:

Case 1, 2005 Autocratization: Ethiopia's nominally Marxist-Leninist military dictatorship fell in 1991 after 17 years of civil war. The civil war's victors –themselves members of historically excluded ethnic groups– implemented AEF, which they claimed would create a more inclusive and decentralized polity. However, the new constitution empowered the national government (centralization), which was dominated by ethnic Tigrayans (ethnic exclusion). Under these conditions, I would expect national incumbents to respond to a crisis with authoritarian repression.

The ruling coalition was seriously challenged by the opposition's electoral success as well as post-election unrest in 2005. They immediately responded to this crisis by autocratizing, imprisoning and repressing opposition leaders and their supporters. I argue that by 2005, national incumbents were especially strong and decisive, which made it relatively easy for them to autocratize. Counterfactually, if the sub-national governments and non-Tigrayans had been more powerful, then national incumbents would have had to deal with sub-national ob-

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Case	2005 Autocratization	2018 Democratization	2019 Autocratization
Institutional Structure	**Centralization:** 1994 constitution & national ruling coalition empower national incumbents. **Exclusion:** Tigrayan control renders national incumbents free from ethnic gridlock.	**Decentralization:** Death of strongman PM Meles Zenawi leads to defiant sub-national governments. **Inclusion:** Meles' death leads to inclusion of non-Tigrayans.	**Centralization:** National government dissolves multi-party ruling coalition, reconstituted as single party. **Exclusion:** Tigrayans do not join new ruling party. Purges of key Oromo incumbents.
⬇	⬇	⬇	⬇
Response to Crisis	**Autocratization:** National government responds to 2005 election crisis (opposition electoral success, post-election protests) with repression. National incumbents act with little reliance on sub-national or non-Tigrayan elites.	**Democratization:** National government responds to 2014-18 mass protest crisis with democratic concessions. National incumbents paralyzed by sub-national defiance and inter-ethnic disagreement. Cannot effectively respond to protests.	**Autocratization:** National government responds to multiple crises (mass protests, attempted regional coup) quickly and decisively. Protesters repressed, alleged coup conspirators imprisoned.

Figure 1.2. Three Ethiopia Regime Change Sequences.

struction and inter-ethnic infighting. This would have prolonged the crisis, perhaps prompting national incumbents to make democratic concessions.

Case 2, 2018 Liberalization: After 2005, Ethiopia's national government remained centralized and ethnically exclusive, reliant on the ethnic Tigrayan Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi. However, Meles' death in 2012 and his replacement by a non-Tigrayan loosened Tigray's control over the national government. Similarly, the end of Meles' strong-man rule emboldened sub-national incumbents, who refused to obey national directives. Ethiopia thus became more decentralized and inclusive.

Mass protests between 2014-18 seriously challenged the national government, threatening its control over two key regions. Yet in this more decentralized, inclusive structure, autocrats in the national government were constrained in their ability to repress. They were dependent on sub-national security forces to resolve the crisis. And they were hampered by inter-ethnic disagreement within the national government, which precluded an efficient response. An inefficient mix of repression and inaction prolonged and intensified the protest crisis over four years. Ultimately, the national government opted to resolve the crisis by making democratic concessions: political prisoners were released, opposition parties legalized, and restrictions on independent news media were lifted.

Case 3, 2019 Autocratization: In late 2018, the brief period of liberalizing reforms gave way to a new period of re-centralization and ethnic exclusion. Once the protests had subsided, the national ruling coalition was dissolved and reconstituted as a single party, which centralized power in the federal government. Meanwhile, Tigrayan incumbents opted not to join the new party, rendering the national government more ethnically exclusive. Key ethnic Oromo leaders were also purged during this time, and the national government strengthened itself through new security and financial alliances with the U.A.E, Eritrea, U.S., and Israel.

Three crises between 2019-20 –an alleged attempted coup and two mass protests– seriously threatened the national government, to which it responded with authoritarian repression.

Importantly, each crisis was resolved within no more than a few days. Compared to the 2018 liberalization case, these responses occurred without much resistance from sub-national governments or from other ethnic elites in the national government.

After discussing the 2019 autocratization, I show how my theory can help explain the Tigray War (2020-22). Briefly, re-centralization and ethnic exclusion after 2018 negatively affected Tigrayan national incumbents and the Tigray regional state. For example, the multi-party national ruling coalition was dissolved and reconstituted as a single party, which Tigrayans refused to join, thus excluding them from national power. In defiance of the national government's COVID-19 directives, Tigray held sub-national elections in September 2020, which quickly became a major crisis. My theory can help explain why the national government responded with autocratization and warfare thereafter.

One worry about the part 2 analysis is that it leaves unclear whether the decisions of actual Ethiopian elites were affected by centralization, ethnic exclusion, and crises. Consider just the 2018 democratization case. Were national autocrats actually constrained by their reliance on sub-national incumbents to resolve the protest crisis (a consequence of decentralization)? Were national autocrats' proposals to resolve the crisis stymied by inter-ethnic disagreement (a consequence of inclusion)?

Elite Interviews

I aim to remedy the part 2 worry through semi-structured interviews conducted in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The interviews help corroborate and refine my theory and case study conclusions, such that these make sense from the perspective of actual Ethiopian decision-makers (Tansey 2009, Driscoll 2021).

I made two research trips to Addis Ababa, in 2018 and 2023.[3] I conducted 20 interviews with both "participants" and "experts." Participant interviewees included current and former politicians, both incumbents and opponents, as well as bureaucrats and executives. I asked

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[3]The Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval numbers for each project are 181293 and 807452, respectively.

participants questions about the constraints and opportunities they faced during specific time periods and crises, as well as the beliefs and reasons underlying their actions, tactics, and strategies. Given that each participant was linked to specific ethnic groups or institutions, I asked about the relevant priorities, debates, and disagreements therein. Expert interviewees included journalists, policy analysts, and academics. I asked experts evaluative and explanatory questions about key events and processes.

My sampling technique followed the "snowball" method: I first reached out to experts, who helped make introductions to participants (Tansey 2007). Participants would then make introductions to other participants (e.g., their superiors) as well as experts. Because I could not anticipate how sensitive the interview data might be, my IRB submission stipulated that all data would be anonymous.

Two potential biases in my interview data stems from the fact that all interviews were conducted (a) in the national capital and (b) in English. Due to security concerns in 2023, and due to my project's incipient nature in 2018, I was unable to conduct interviews in sub-national capitals or rural areas. However, I tried to circumvent this bias by interviewing both participants and experts in sub-national politics while in Addis Ababa. Examples include an incumbent sub-national executive who was on holiday in Addis as well as an incumbent national legislator who worked for years at the sub-national level. Despite my attempts to overcome such geographical biases, they may not be especially worrying. This is because my project focuses largely on *national* incumbents' responses to crises. As such, conducting research outside of the national capital would need further justification.

My focus on specifically national incumbents helps respond to the second potential source of bias, namely that all interviews were conducted in English. However, in Ethiopia and in many other developing countries, those privileged enough to become national incumbents are almost invariably English-speakers. When scheduling interviews, I made sure to mention my willingness to use an interpreter if necessary.

Interviews provided opportunities for participants to refine the claim that "Different

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combinations of centralization and exclusion shaped incumbents' incentives and opportunities to respond to crises." As I discuss in the three case study chapters, Ethiopian observers have disagreed in their explanations of each regime change outcome. Some of these explanations include mass protests demanding democratization (Lyons 2019), unsupportive political cultures that push elites to autocratize (Abbink 2006), and ruling party fragmentation that leads elites to panic and autocratize (Samatar 2005, Clapham 2005). Interview sessions provided a useful setting to develop or push back on such alternative explanations, as well as to see if they could be integrated with my more institutional account.

1.4 Background on Ethiopia

Part 2 of this dissertation focuses on Ethiopia, a country whose long history of identity-based divisions –over nationality, ethnicity, language, and religion– helped justify the implementation of authoritarian ethnofederalism in 1991. Ethiopian groups have coexisted more or less peacefully over time under different political institutions. This dissertation takes as its starting point that AEF is Ethiopia's most salient political institution. It asks how changes to Ethiopia's AEF since 1991 have affected its democratic trajectory. As such, it is worth briefly reviewing Ethiopian political history.

Ethiopia, a country of 115 million, is both old and new, as seen in Figure 1.3. Its "old" territory traces to the Solomonic dynasty, founded around 900 CE. This includes the contemporary Tigray and Amhara regions and its largely Orthodox Christian, Semitic language-speaking inhabitants. The Solomonic Emperors incorporated Ethiopia's "new" territories as recently as the early 20th century. This includes Ethiopia's remaining 9 regions, where many other groups –like the Oromo and Somali– practice largely non-Orthodox religions and speak a variety of Cushitic languages. Table 1.2 provides basic information on the four ethnic groups that each constitute at least 5% of Ethiopia's population.

The Solomonic dynasty was controlled by emperors from present-day Amhara,[4] who,

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[4]This was notably interrupted by Tigrayan Emperor Yohannes (1867-1871).

c. 900 ······●	Founding of Solomonic dynasty.
1769-1855 ······●	"Era of Princes," central authority collapses.
1855-68 ······●	Rule by Emperor Tewodros II reestablishes central authority.
1889-1913 ······●	Rule by Emperor Menelik II, conquers Oromo kingdom.
1930-74 ······●	Rule by Emperor Haile Selassie I.
1943 ······●	*Woyane* Rebellion in Tigray against Selassie's centralization.
1973 ······●	Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) established.
1974-91 ······●	Rule by *Derg* military dictatorship, which fights civil wars against Eritrean, Tigrayan, and Oromo separatists.
1976-77 ······●	*Derg*'s "Red Terror" campaign against opponents, 50-200k deaths.
1983-85 ······●	400k-1.2 million famine deaths, mostly in Tigray & Amhara.
1991 ······●	Derg overthrown by Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), led by Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF).
1994 ······●	Ethnofederal constitution adopted.
2005 ······●	**Case study 1: Autocratization episode.**
2018 ······●	**Case study 2: Liberalization episode.**
2019 ······●	**Case study 3: Autocratization episode.**
2020-22 ······●	Tigray War.

Figure 1.3. Ethiopian History, 900 CE-Present. Subsequent chapters provide more detailed timelines for each case study.

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Table 1.2. Ethiopian Demographics. Source: 2007 census.

Group	% of Population	Language	Religion
Oromo	35	Oromo	Islam, Protestantism, Orthodox Christianity
Amhara	27	Amharic	Orthodox Christianity
Tigrayan	6	Tigrinya	Orthodox Christianity
Somali	6	Somali	Islam

along with their aristocratic and ecclesiastical allies, oversaw a feudal, theocratic empire. Access to political, economic, and social power required speaking Amharic and practicing Orthodox Christianity (Vaughan 2015).[5] Although ordinary ethnic Amharas did not materially benefit under imperial rule, they did benefit culturally, seeing their language and religion elevated. For this reason, many Amharas and multi-ethnic urbanites[6] tend to conceptualize Ethiopia as one nation for whom ethnic politics is inappropriately divisive (Tazebew 2012). By contrast, many non-Amharas tend to conceptualize Ethiopia as a multi-national state for which ethnic politics serves to rectify historical injustices (Jalata 1998).

Ethiopia's last emperor, Haile Selassie (1930-1974), ruled an increasingly unstable polity, marked by revolts in present-day Tigray and Amhara and insurgencies in Eritrea, Oromia, and Somali. Yet Haile Selassie's most formidable opponent was the Ethiopian Student Movement (ESM), a Marxist-Leninist organization at Addis Ababa University (Zewde 2004). ESM's ideology –all of its members were socialists but only some were ethno-nationalists– eventually made its way into the military, leading to a coup that removed Haile Selassie in 1974 (Tiruneh 1993). The ensuing *Derg* military junta eventually became a personalist dictatorship ruled by Mengistu Haile Mariam. The *Derg* centrally planned Ethiopia's economy and liquidated its opponents. This included class-based opponents who accused the *Derg* of betraying Marxist-Leninist principles, as well as ethno-nationalist opponents who were especially prominent in

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[5]Ethiopian history is highly contested. Whether it is told as a story of African triumph by a united people or as settler-colonial empire often depends on the ethnicity of whom one asks (Marzagora 2017).

[6]Many such urbanites have one Amhara parent.

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present-day Eritrea, Tigray, and Oromia.

After 17 years of poor economic growth, famine, and civil war, the *Derg* was overthrown in 1991. As Eritrean insurgents prepared to secede, Ethiopia's most powerful belligerent was the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) (Young 1997). TPLF, also a Marxist-Leninist organization, claimed to speak for Ethiopia's historically excluded ethnic groups (i.e., outside of present-day Amhara). It thus espoused a multi-national conception of Ethiopia and endorsed ethnofederalism. But TPLF knew that it could not rule Ethiopia alone while representing only 6% of its population in Tigray (Lyons 2019). TPLF thus created the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), a coalition of subordinate ethno-national front parties for Amharas, Oromos, and Southerners. TPLF quite literally created these Oromo and southern front parties from *Derg* prisoners of war and schoolteachers, among other groups. Unsurprisingly, TPLF exercised an outsized role in EPRDF.

Under TPLF's stewardship, EPRDF adopted ethnofederalism, as seen in Figure 1.4. It was influenced by the Leninist-Stalinist approach to ethno-national conflict: Federal autonomy could appease and co-opt ethno-national groups, until which time such groups would no longer focus on ethnic identity but on class. On the one hand, TPLF-EPRDF was well aware of Ethiopia's history of centralization and ethnic exclusion, seeing ethnofederalism as a remedy. On the other, it was –much like Lenin and Stalin– not especially bothered by considerations of liberal democracy upon gaining state power. Ethiopia has been an AEF ever since 1991.

1.5   Contributions and Implications

This dissertation makes at least two contributions to scholarship on regime change, power-sharing, and Ethiopian studies. The first is to provide a framework for (a) conceptualizing autocratic ethnofederalism (AEF), a distinctive kind of power-sharing system and (b) explaining an important share of AEF regime changes. I find that decentralized autonomy and ethnically inclusive national governments can facilitate democratic change in the face of crises. Conversely,

Figure 1.4. Ethnofederal Map of Ethiopia, 2023

centralization and ethnic exclusion may empower autocrats to resist democratic change in the face of crises.

These findings have implications for international democracy promotion. Democracy promoters have focused on many different "magic bullets" when dealing with autocracies (Carothers 2015). Examples range from strengthening civil society, eliminating corruption, including women in politics, and improving governance (Bush 2015). My findings suggest that when dealing with AEFs in particular, democracy promoters could benefit by striving to deepen both substantive decentralization and ethnic inclusion in the federal government. This combination of forces may serve to strengthen the institutional obstacles to re-centralization and exclusion.

My findings also have implications for Ethiopian political discourse, where two questions are especially salient: (1) Is ethnofederalism an appropriate institution for Ethiopia? and (2) Can Ethiopia democratize? I find that there do exist conditions under which AEFs like Ethiopia can become more democratic. Whether these conditions can be realized may depend –as it did in Ethiopia in 2018– on sustained, peaceful mass mobilization that challenges the national government (Stephan & Chenoweth 2008). I find that there is an alternative institutional structure that could have prevented Ethiopia's 2019 autocratization (and possibly its 2020-22 Tigray War). The actions of national incumbents –who sought to create a more centralized, exclusive ethnofederation– were perhaps made possible by inadequate decentralization and ethnic inclusion. Much as in Yugoslavia under Milosevic, the problem may not be ethnofederalism per se but rather attempts to centralize power and exclude ethnic rivals (Grigoryan 2012). If national incumbents can credibly commit to decentralizing power and including diverse ethnic elites –itself a demanding task– then Ethiopia might look toward a more democratic *and* ethnofederal future (Keefer 2008).

My second contribution is to offer a framework for (c) situating Ethiopia in a distinct universe of cases, thus tempering claims about exceptionalism, and (d) understanding over 30 years of Ethiopian history, including its 2018 liberalization and the 2020-22 Tigray War. To begin,

some aspects of Ethiopia's political history are exceptional. No other polity was ruled as a feudal, imperial theocracy for one thousand years –while largely avoiding European colonization[7]– and then as a Marxist-Leninist military dictatorship. Yet Ethiopia is not so exceptional when placed in the universe of autocratic ethnofederations, where political actors who benefited from (or were disadvantaged by) federalism became key players during regime changes. The former communist AEFs –the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia– loom especially large in this conversation, leading Abebe (2016) to call Ethiopia "The Last Post-Cold War Socialist Federation." I extend this focus beyond socialism and to AEF more generally.

Ethiopia's many problems demand our attention. It is a poor, ethnically-divided, illiberal autocracy. Since 2018, it has claimed the world's largest internally displaced persons crisis. Most of Ethiopia's problems have magnified since the Tigray War, which was one of the 21st century's deadliest. However, journalists[8] and social scientists[9] have not discussed the war in much length, especially compared to Russia's invasion of Ukraine (2022-). While both wars have been horrific, it is noteworthy that the Tigray War claimed many more lives (recent estimates are over 600,000 fatalities) than the Russian invasion (over 10,000 fatalities) at the time of writing. The Tigray War arguably constituted a famine and genocide. It was characterized by serious human rights abuses, including sexual violence and the destruction of agricultural and health facilities. More broadly, the war aggravated ethnic divisions, wasted economic development on warfare, helped legitimate an autocratic state of exception for the warring national government, and worsened security in the Horn of Africa, as evidenced by Eritrea's involvement. The success of Ethiopia's November 2022 cessation of hostilities is uncertain. Establishing a durable peace requires understanding the war's antecedents.

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[7] Ethiopia was briefly occupied by the Italian Empire between 1936–41.

[8] See articles in The Guardian (Beaumont 2022), American Enterprise Institute (Rubin 2022), and Jacobin (Nuemann 2023).

[9] A forum in the *Journal of Genocide Research* (2022, Vol 1.) stands out as an exception, as does Plaut and Vaughan's (2023) recent *Understanding Ethiopia's Tigray War* manuscript.

Chapter 2

Theory and Cross-National Analysis

2.1 Introduction

This chapter conceptualizes autocratic ethnofederalism (AEF), a kind of federalism where (a) top leaders are neither freely nor fairly elected and (b) sub-national governments are ethnic homelands. My theory begins from the observation that many AEF regime changes have occurred after serious crises, like inter-communal violence or mass protests. I offer an inductive theory to explain why AEF leaders sometimes respond to crises with authoritarian repression and other times with democratic concessions.

AEF regime changes have occurred without prior crises, e.g., due to international pressure to hold elections. And crises have been resolved without regime changes, e.g., when leaders respond to crises by redistributing wealth. However, my focus on crises can account for an important share of AEF regime changes.

I theorize the importance of different combinations of centralization and ethnic exclusion, which affect incumbents' responses to crises. I thus make an "AND" argument about the conjunction or combination of two factors, centralization AND exclusion. Different combinations change the probability that autocrats can effectively respond to crises with repression. These factors describe different kinds of relationships: centralization between national and sub-national governments, and exclusion between ethnic incumbents within the national government. However, centralization and exclusion (and decentralization and inclusion) are strongly correlated,

which simplifies my theoretical task.

Beginning with the first major combination: whens AEFs are centralized and ethnically exclusive, this will empower national incumbents to respond to crises with repression. This is because centralization strengthens the national government vis-a-vis sub-national governments, while exclusion renders the national government more decisive in its control by one ethnic group.

By contrast, when AEFs are decentralized and ethnically inclusive, this will tend to weaken national incumbents. This is because decentralization empowers sub-national incumbents to refuse to cooperate with national incumbents to resolve a crisis. Meanwhile, inclusion renders the national government more factionalized: its diverse group of ethnic leaders will be less likely to agree on an response to the crisis. Weak national incumbents will be unable to resolve crises with repression. These conditions will tend to prolong the crisis, compelling national incumbents to respond with democratic concessions.

After developing the theory, I present data on the universe of AEFs and AEF regime changes since 1922. I code every AEF in terms of its centralization and ethnic exclusion. I then identify each democratization and autocratization episode and the crises that preceded them. This exercise helps identify 21 cases of regime change that were preceded by crises. Cases where regime changes did not occur or where regime changes were not preceded by crises are excluded from my analysis.

The patterns that emerge from this exploratory analysis offer preliminary support for the theory. On the one hand, in 100% (4/4 cases) of the decentralized, inclusive AEFs that faced crises prior to a regime change, incumbents responded with democratic concessions. This includes significant democratization episodes, like those in the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia that followed mass protests and ethnic violence. However, the number of cases here is small, which prompts us to find more detailed evidence linking each component of the theory.

On the other hand, in 81% (13/16 cases) of the centralized, exclusive AEFs that faced crises prior to a regime change, incumbents responded with authoritarian repression. This

includes significant autocratization episodes, like the military coups in Burma (1962), Nigeria (1983), and Pakistan (1978 and 1999).

Despite this preliminary support for the theory, this chapter analyzes a large and diverse number of cases in limited detail. It is difficult to provide conclusive support for the theorized sequence in every case. How precisely have centralization and exclusion been linked with autocrats' responses to crises? Answering this question requires understanding the chains of events and elite decisions that have occurred before, during, and after different crisis periods. Chapters 3-5 conduct three extensive case studies of Ethiopia in order to clearly trace these processes. The theory informs the case studies, helping to structure periods of Ethiopian history in a simple way. And the cases inform the theory, helping to render it more precise and concrete.

This chapter proceeds as follows. In section 2.2, I define AEF and discuss the causes and consequences of its implementation. In section 2.3, I theorize how centralization and ethnic exclusion are connected to regime change through their effects on national incumbents' opportunities during crises. In section 2.4, I present data on the universe of AEFs, operationalize each theoretical component, and then discuss the patterns that emerge from my analysis of AEF regime changes. Finally, in section 2.5, I set the stage for subsequent, Ethiopia-focused chapters.

Appendix A justifies my coding choices for the universe of AEFs. Appendix B discusses some controversial or borderline cases of AEFs (i.e., those that may in fact be territorial federations or federacies) and regime changes (i.e., coding errors in the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) data set).

2.2 Definitions and Literature Review

2.2.1 Defining Autocratic Ethnofederalism

Autocratic ethnofederations combine autocracy and ethnofederalism. Autocracy is a regime where elections for top executive and legislative positions either (a) are not held ('closed autocracy') or (b) are held, but are neither free nor fair ('electoral autocracy') (Snyder 2006,

Maerz et al. 2021). By contrast, democracy is a regime where elections for these positions are either (c) free and fair ('electoral democracy') or (d) free and fair, in addition to citizens being guaranteed a host of liberal freedoms[1] ('liberal democracy').

Ethnofederations are federations where the sub-national governments (or states, republics, provinces) are ethnic homelands (Roeder 2009). For example, Pakistan's Punjab province is the home of Punjabi speakers. Ethnofederations differ from territorial (or simple, geographical, non-ethnic) federations, where the states (e.g., California, Jalisco, Queensland) are arbitrarily drawn and do not correspond to ethnic homelands. Ethnofederations also differ from "federacies," which are otherwise unitary states that provide autonomy to one or a few (ethnic) provinces.[2] For example, Indonesia is a unitary country that provides special autonomy to the Aceh and Papua provinces. In order for a country to count as (ethno)federal, sub-national governments must control at least one policy domain that the national government does not (Watts 1998). Examples include taxation, security, and education. Although some autocratic ethnofederations afford ethnic groups very little federal autonomy, such groups still control one or a few policy domains. They are thus not unitary countries.

The counting of ethnofederations is contested. For example, does Canada count, where only the Quebec province is an ethnic homeland? Hale (2004, 167) stipulates that "at least one" unit must be an ethnic homeland, but this risks conflating ethnofederations with federacies. Roeder (2009, 204) and Bunce and Watts (2005, 135) have more demanding counting rules: "at least some" and "at least some, if not all" units must be ethnic homelands, respectively. But more demanding rules risk neglecting important ethnofederations, like Ethiopia's between 1952-62, where only Eritrea was federated with Ethiopia. Counting rules or operationalizations

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[1]These include "access to justice, or transparent law enforcement...respect for personal liberties, rule of law, and judicial as well as legislative constraints on the executive" (Coppedge et al. 2023, 283).

[2]Although I treat ethnofederalism as a single category, Anderson (2012) distinguishes between "ethnic" and "ethnoterritorial" federations. The former affords each ethnic group its own unit, while the latter disperses large ethnic group(s) across multiple units. The Soviet Union was an ethnic federation because Russians were afforded the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. Russia is an ethnoterritorial federation because no one republic houses Russians. This distinction is theoretically important because it corresponds to Hale's (2004) argument that ethnic federations, by affording federal institutions to "core" ethnic groups, are more likely to fail.

are important because they determine how many AEFs have "failed," usually defined as (a) secession or (b) abrogation of federalism, making the country unitary.[3] For example, Pakistan's ethnofederation failed when East Pakistan seceded in 1971, leading to Bangladesh's creation. Cameroon's failed when president Ahmadou Ahidjo re-centralized power and abrogated the Anglophone unit in 1972. It may be better to speak of "termination" instead of "failure" given the latter's normative connotations. For example, Yugoslavia may have "failed" when multiple units seceded in 1992, but this came after decades of "success" in managing an ethnically divided polity (Grigoryan 2012).

Autocratic ethnofederalism may appear oxymoronic. Indeed, national autocrats are likely averse to sharing power with sub-national leaders, yet genuine federalism requires shared rule and self rule (Watts 1998). Whereas democrats value federalism (e.g., for strengthening sub-national participation or representation), autocrats would seem to devalue it. So how can federalism and autocracy co-exist? Here one must distinguish between sub-national governments controlling policy domains on the one hand, and sub-national leaders being democratically elected on the other. Just as democracy and freedom are separate concepts, so too are democracy and federalism (Riker 1964). Some long-lasting federations themselves have histories of autocracy. For example, several of the United States were governed as sub-national autocracies until the 1964 Civil Rights Act and arguably thereafter (Mickey 2015). Federations can be placed on a continuum between "demos-enabling " and "demos-constraining" (Stepan 1999).

2.2.2 Defining Regime Change

My dependent variable is the *outcome* of a regime change episode. By contrast, I do not focus on the *occurrence* of an episode. I argue that regime changes are responses by national incumbents to various crises like mass protests. However, the occurrence and intensity of these

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[3]By contrast, Kavaski and Zolkos (2008) define failure as the inability to accommodate ethnic minorities, e.g., persistent violations of minority rights by the state. On this definition, however, most autocratic ethnofederations seem to have failed simply because of their autocracy. Indeed, autocrats persistently violate rights with little regard for victims' ethnicity.

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crises are hard to predict. As such, I focus on predicting the outcome of regime change (i.e.,
whether it is more or less democratic) once crises have already occurred.

Regime changes are movements along an autocracy-democracy continuum, which either
improve or diminish the quality of elections and civil liberties. These can be either qualitative or
incremental, as displayed in Figure 2.1. For simplicity, I refer to any change in a democratizing
direction as a democratizing change, even changes from closed to electoral autocracy. Similarly,
autocratizing changes occur even when liberal democracies become electoral democracies. For
example, the United States partially autocratized during Donald Trump's presidency even if it
remained a liberal democracy (Dresden & Howard 2016).
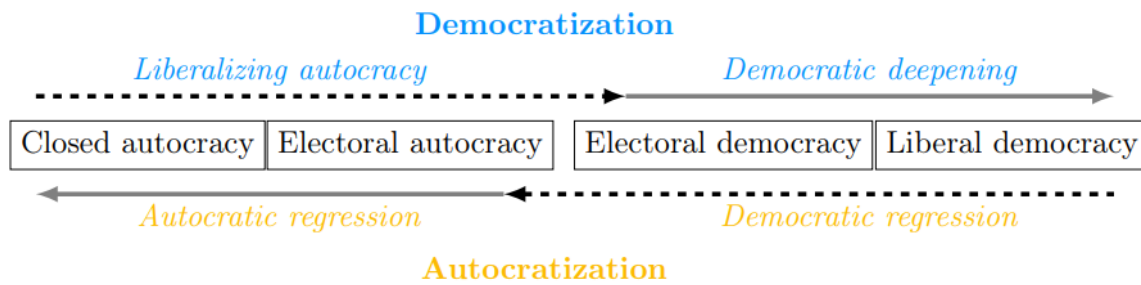
Figure 2.1. Conceptualizing Regime Change. Source: Maerz et al. (2021).

The first, qualitative kind of regime change involves movements from one to another of
the four aforementioned regime types: closed autocracy, electoral autocracy, electoral democracy,
and liberal democracy. Thus, regime change occurs when closed autocracies hold unfree, unfair
elections (closed → electoral autocracy), when electoral autocracies suspend elections (electoral
autocracy → closed), when liberal democracies suspend liberal rights (liberal democracy →
electoral democracy), and so on. For example, Burma went from being an electoral autocracy to
a closed autocracy when the military seized power in 1962 and suspended elections.

The second, incremental kind of regime change involves changes within a given regime
type. Autocratizing and democratizing episodes of this kind are often called regressions and
liberalizations, respectively. For example, a closed autocracy may imprison more opposition
leaders (closed → regression), or it may release opposition leaders (closed → liberalization), but

still without holding unfair elections that are characteristic of electoral autocracy. Similarly, an electoral autocracy may imprison more opposition leaders while still holding unfair elections (electoral autocracy → regression). Ethiopia's electoral autocracy liberalized in 2018 when many political prisoners were released, but this did not change the unfairness of Ethiopian elections.

2.2.3   Causes and Consequences of Autocratic Ethnofederalism

Causes of Autocratic Ethnofederalism

Autocrats often govern ethnically (or racially, nationally, religiously) diverse polities. From this observation there have been two broad paths to autocratic ethnofederalism, depending on whether ethnic diversity is seen as (1) a useful resource to exploit or (2) a problem to solve. On the first, "colonial/imperial" path, colonial autocrats saw ethnofederalism as a way to divide ethnic groups into discrete states. This helped minimize the possibility of ethnic groups coordinating to challenge the colonial center. Ethnofederalism thus institutionalized the ethnic differences that colonial authorities had exaggerated or even created (Enloe 1977, Hassan 2019). Examples include Malaysia and Nigeria (constructed by the British), Cameroon (British and French), and Indonesia (Dutch) (Bhattacharyya 2020, Bertrand 2004). In this sense, ethnofederalism is one among several institutions (e.g., legislatures, courts, elections, etc.) that enable autocrats to co-opt their opponents (Magaloni 2006). Autocratic ethnofederalism creates sub-national positions for opponents and helps the autocrat gather useful information, e.g., low vote shares in one unit indicate dissatisfaction among specific ethnic groups (Gandhi 2008).

On the second, "failed alternatives" path to AEF, autocrats viewed ethnic division as a destabilizing problem. Autocrats may attempt to solve this through forced population transfers, forced assimilation, or even state-sponsored genocide. However, these techniques are costly: genocide and population transfers aggrieve domestic and international actors, while assimilation is a long process owing to the "stickiness" of social identities (Choudhry 2008). More appropriate solutions involve "power-sharing" between the autocrat and ethnic challengers. Power-sharing involves "social, political, or ethnic groups...[being] guaranteed a role in their own governance

either through allocated positions in the state or through institutionalized group participation in administrative, electoral, or appointive procedures" (Call 2012, 40). This may include the political institutions that Lijphart (2004) calls "consociationalism" (e.g., 'grand' executive ruling coalitions and proportional representation electoral rules), economic inclusion (e.g., group control over key economic sectors), guaranteed parity in the military or police, and territorial autonomy (Hartzell & Hoddie 2003). From this perspective, power-sharing is a cost-effective solution.

Because ethnic identities are such a potent force in the modern world, ethnic groups are likely to desire territorial autonomy. This is especially true when alternative institutions fail to appease them. For example, simple or territorial federalism fails to acknowledge ethnic difference at the sub-national level. Meanwhile, federacies afford small concessions that do not alter the state's unitary character. Perceptive autocrats have thus chosen to create ethnofederations even when they found ethnic attachments otherwise deplorable, simply because other alternatives had failed. For example, many Bolsheviks saw ethnofederalism as

> not just wrong, but heretical...[ethnic] nationalism, after all, was nothing more than a clever invention of the bourgeoisie designed to deceive and divide the working classes of the world, pitting them against each other, rather than against their true oppressors (Grigoryan 2012, 525; Connor 1984).

Yet the Russian-speaking Bolsheviks knew they could not realize communism without affording autonomy to groups like Ukrainians who detested the unitary Russian empire (Smith 1999, Weeks 2013).

Consequences of Autocratic Ethnofederalism

This dissertation argues that in AEFs, an important share of regime changes can be understood as responses to crises; different responses can be explained as a consequence of different ethnofederal institutions. My argument is informed by the broader literature on ethnofederalism and its consequences. Much of this literature analyzes how ethnofederalism affects stability and state collapse. This is relevant because regime change can itself undermine the stability of

autocratic ethnofederations, as when the Soviet Union liberalized in 1990 before collapsing in 1991. Although some such scholarship has been informed by democratic ethnofederations, I focus this discussion on phenomena that occur across regime types, such as the salience of ethnic identities, elites' reluctance to change institutions from which they benefit, and ethnic gridlock.

A first generation of scholarship viewed ethnofederations as inherently prone to crises. This informs my argument that crises motivate elites to democratize or autocratize. Inspired by the breakup of the three communist AEFs –the USSR, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia– these largely critical perspectives argued that ethnofederalism increases the salience of ethnic identities, which are thought to be more exclusionary and hostile than class or partisan identities (Bunce 1999a, Cornell 2002, Roeder 2009, Snyder 2000, Chandra 2006). Ethnofederalism creates a class of ethnic leaders who "activate" ethnic identities, "re-casting [even the most mundane policy issues]...in terms of the rights of the homeland" (Roeder 2009, 211). Once activated, ethnic identities become dominant and supersede all others, prompting ethnic leaders to engage in "outbidding" (Esman 2000).[4] Ethnofederalism thus creates "centrifugal" tendencies, empowering peripheral groups who benefit from autonomy. Armed with these "subversive institutional" resources –like sub-national police– ethnic leaders can more easily harm ethnic minorities or violently secede (Bunce 1999a). Meanwhile, mixed-ethnicity individuals will not neatly fit into ethnofederal categories. Yet there is little hope of reversing these trends, because ethnofederalism is managed by its elite beneficiaries who are unwilling to cede power by changing it. As Hughes (2017, 151) puts it, "few could argue that ethnofederalism offers an attractive vision of the "Good Life" for any state seeking to build an integrated democratic civic culture."

Proponents of ethnofederalism have responded that even if critics' arguments are plausible, ethnofederalism is still the best among alternatives. Recall that ethnofederalism is usually implemented after unitary alternatives have failed to appease ethnic groups. In this context

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[4]For example, politician *P1* campaigns on forcibly removing ethnic minorities from the regional homeland while criticizing *P2* for his feebleness on the issue. This incentivizes *P2* to make more extreme appeals and outbid *P1*. (Rabushka & Shepsle 1972). Mill (1861, ch. XVI) calls this "the government's interest in keeping up and envenoming antipathies."

–where ethnic leaders are the main players and ethnic distrust is rampant– any alternative to ethnofederalism will be "motivationally inadequate" (Horowitz 1985, Choudhry 2008). This informs my understanding of Ethiopia, which became an AEF after a 17-year civil war where ethnic leaders demanded autonomy. Proponents argue that ethnofederalism still offers the best chance of giving aggrieved groups what they want, namely autonomy. This should decrease violence and secession (Hechter 2000, McGarry & O'Leary 2005). Quantitative studies have positively linked ethnofederalism with peace (Gurr 2000, Norris 2008, Hartzell & Hoddie 2003). Finally, proponents argue that ethnofederal criticism is unfairly colored by the Soviet, Yugoslav, and Czechoslovakian dissolutions. Despite their breakups capturing the world's attention, all three countries were intact and arguably stable for decades before dissolving. And all three dissolved during a period of political, economic, and social change that unitary countries would have also had a hard time managing (Bermeo 1994). Proponents argue that even if ethnofederal institutions are subversive, subversion is not a necessary outcome; perhaps ethnofederalism simply leads to gridlock, which can be interpreted as stability or infrequent policy change (Anderson 2012).

A second generation of scholarship moved from asking whether ethnofederalism is inherently unstable to asking under what conditions it is unstable (Erk & Anderson 2009). This informs my argument that AEF regime changes occur under very specific conditions. Here are four factors of note:

1. Cores: Affording "core" ethnic groups (defined as a majority group or one that is 20% larger than the second largest group) their own units, as opposed to spreading them across multiple units can be destabilizing. This is because core units will compete with the national government for members' loyalties or threaten minority units.[5] However, core ethnic groups will rarely consent to being spread across multiple units (Anderson 2012). (One exception

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[5]For Mill (1861, ch. XVII), cores "will be apt to think that they do not gain, by union with others, the equivalent of what they sacrifice in their own liberty of action; and consequently, whenever [federal policy] is different from that which any one of its members would separately pursue, the internal and sectional breach will, through absence of sufficient anxiety to preserve the Union, be in danger of going so far as to dissolve it."

is Nigeria, where new units have been seen as additional sources of pork for self-interested ethnic politicians (Suberu 2009).)

2. Unit homogeneity: Homogeneous units or states transform ethnic minorities into regional majorities, ensuring that they are never permanently excluded from politics and discouraging them from taking up arms (Adeney 2009). However, homogeneous units may make secession easier because it decreases the need for inter-ethnic compromise on boundaries (Kavalsky & Zolkos 2008).

3. Asymmetries: Affording ethnic regions distinct powers may help appease them (Stepan et al. 2011). Asymmetry can further undermine regions' collective bargaining power, increasing stability. For example, after the Soviet Union's collapse, Boris Yeltsin negotiated asymmetries with the rebellious Tatarstan and Bashkortostan republics (Solnick 1998). However, asymmetry can lead to destabilizing inter-regional resentment (Hosking 2006). Autocrats in the national government must thus be careful in making asymmetric bargains.

4. Flexible amendment procedures: Flexible procedures can help prevent conflict by ensuring that conflictual identities are not "frozen" in place (Rothchild & Roeder 2005). Potential changes include redrawing regional borders, reformulating ethnic quotas, or changing local languages. Inflexible amendment procedures can lead to gridlock and instability. For example, Yugoslavia's 1974 constitution and Czechoslovakia's 1968 constitution required unanimity and 88% super-majorities for amendment, respectively. These were seen as crucial institutional causes of dissolution.

Regime Change, Ethnicity, and Federalism

This dissertation draws on scholarship highlighting the ways that ethnicity and federalism complicate regime change. Briefly, we know that regime changes are uncertain sequences[6] that can cause disorder and violence (Wilson 2019). Political elites attempt to assess their level of

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[6]Machiavelli (1532) argued that regime changes require their own science of politics due to the importance of *fortuna* (uncertainty) and *virtù* (leaders' contingent choices) (O'Donnell & Schmitter 1986).

popular support and capacity to act without traditional constraints. This is because "routine" sources of authority like police may be weakened or demoralized (Tajima 2014).

Elites may see these decreasing constraints as opportunities to scapegoat ethnic others, emphasizing rights and entitlements for their co-ethnics. Appeals to ethnic victimhood may undermine or distract from attempts to build responsive democratic institutions, thus perpetuating autocracy (Mansfield & Snyder 2007). Public expressions of ethnic resentment may likely increase during regime changes (Adeney 2016). Ethnic elites have become especially visible actors since the 1990s, eclipsing the military (Schmitter 2018). Meanwhile, secessionists may mobilize additional support for their independence projects without fearing reprisal (Leff 1999, Crescenzi 1999).

Regime changes open up space for elites to "renegotiate the national model," which is a "vision" of how the polity ought to be organized (Bertrand 2004). Questions like "is our state composed of one nation or many nations?" and "what kind of system (unitary vs. federal vs. ethnofederal) best suits our nation(s)?" take on heightened significance. Elites can mobilize followers around claims about the appropriate degree of centralization or the ruling party's ethnic composition. Because ethnicity is a salient mobilizing tool, elites may claim that the transition can only succeed if ethnic others are excluded from the ruling party, or if power is re-centralized to undermine "rogue" sub-national governments. When one ethnic group is leading the transition, competing groups may be castigated as enemies.

Federalism creates additional instabilities during regime change, as actors vie to control the "multiple arenas for contestation," namely the national and sub-national governments (Leff 1999, 217). As the national government struggles to manage these arenas, sub-national governments may use their "institutional weapons" (e.g., security forces) in destabilizing ways, repressing ethnic minorities or proclaiming independence. This was the case among Soviet Republics, which proclaimed independence after Gorbachev's liberalizing reforms began in 1985 (Brown 1997). Sub-national incumbents may believe they can gain more autonomy by fighting (Fearon 1994). But if sub-national elites make unrealistic proposals, national elites may wish to

simply repress them, which further decreases the likelihood of democratization.

2.3   Theory

This section presents an inductive theory of why autocratic ethnofederations sometimes become more democratic and other times more autocratic in the face of crises. I argue that different AEF institutions affect the likelihood that national government incumbents respond to crises with democratic concessions or authoritarian backlash. My theoretical sequence is not necessary for regime changes, which may occur through other sequences (e.g., international pressure to hold elections) and in the absence of crises. However, it seems to help explain an important share of AEF regime changes.

My theory is informed by (a) scholarship on the causes of ethnofederal collapse and (b) my understanding of AEF regime changes, in particular the Ethiopian and Communist (Czechoslovakian, Soviet, and Yugoslav) cases. Social scientists know that centralization and ethnic exclusion are important for understanding both the origins and stability of ethnofederations. Indeed, ethnofederations are more likely to be implemented in unitary, centralized countries with histories of ethnic exclusion. And they are more likely to collapse when leaders re-centralize power and attempt to create a more ethnically exclusive polity (Kavaski & Zolkos 2008, McGarry & O'Leary 2009). In addition, ethnofederations may be especially prone to crises, such as secessionist threats and violence against regional minorities. I believe that an understanding of centralization, exclusion, and crises can help us explain not only regime collapse but regime change.

I begin by defining centralization and ethnic exclusion and briefly explaining why countries vary along these dimensions. I then define crises and explain their importance for my theory. Finally, I explain how centralization, ethnic exclusion, and crises are connected to AEF regime changes. This is followed by a discussion of whether centralization and exclusion should be theorized in terms of static levels or dynamic trends.

2.3.1 Definitions

Centralization and Ethnic Exclusion

Centralization refers to situations where the national government is powerful and sub-national governments are weak, meaning that the latter do not control important policy domains. In centralized autocratic ethnofederations –like the Soviet Union under Stalin– sub-national governments lack both "self rule" and "shared rule." This means that the national government determines sub-national policy and that sub-national governments cannot influence national policy (Reidl & Dickovick 2014). By contrast, **decentralization**[7] refers to the opposite scenario: the national government is weak and sub-national governments are strong. Examples include Yugoslavia after its 1974 constitution was implemented and Bosnia-Herzegovina at its inception.

Centralization can be either de jure or de facto. De jure centralization typically involves a constitution that affords the national government more powers than sub-national governments. For example, Ethiopia's 1994 constitution affords the national government control over taxation, land, and natural resources. By contrast, de facto centralization involves actions by the national government (or ruling party, military, etc.) to undermine sub-national governments' constitutional autonomy. For example, constitutional courts packed with loyalists of the national government may interpret sub-national autonomy in a limited way (Hassan 2019). Or, hegemonic national parties may fill sub-national governments with loyalists who simply carry out national directives.[8] Meanwhile, de jure decentralization involves a more balanced constitution that affords sub-national governments extensive powers. By contrast, de facto decentralization may arise where the national government is dependent upon a sub-national government because of the latter's natural resource wealth.

National ruling parties or coalitions are often the key to understanding de facto centraliza-

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[7]For simplicity, I ignore the distinction between decentralization, deconcentration, devolution, and delegation (Hassan 2019).

[8]At the extreme, centralized and decentralized AEFs would simply be unitary and confederal autocracies, respectively. However, I define ethnofederalism such that national and sub-national governments both exist and have constitutional control over at least one policy domain. Under confederalism, for example, national governments either do not exist or only control those domains afforded to them by the sub-national governments.

tion (Reidl & Dickovick 2014). Examples include Malaysia's Barisan Nasional coalition and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Such parties nominate candidates for sub-national elections and appoint cadres to the sub-national bureaucracy. In addition, ruling party practices may structure national and sub-national politics. For example, decision-making in the Soviet Union was structured by the Communist Party practice of "democratic centralism," where sub-national incumbents "democratically" discussed issues but were required to obey once a national decision had been reached (Smith 1999, Von Beyme 1975, Young 1997). Similarly, the Communist Party controlled Soviet society through the *nomenklatura* system of appointments (Rigby 1988).

Ethnic exclusion refers to the relationship between ethnic elites within the national government or the key national decision-making organ, e.g., the politburo, cabinet, military, or ruling party.[9] Exclusion involves the dominance of one ethnic group. **Ethnic inclusion** involves the co-optation of –or sharing of power between– many different ethnic elites. Centralization and exclusion thus describe different kinds of relationships: between national and sub-national governments on the one hand, and within national governments on the other.

Much as with centralization, ethnic exclusion can be de jure or de facto. De jure exclusion may involve bans on specific ethnic parties, while de jure inclusion may involve reserved ethnic seats in the national government. Bosnia and Herzegovina exemplified the latter, owing to its constitutional power-sharing between Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats. By contrast, de facto ethnic exclusion may involve reserved ethnic seats that are in fact occupied by ethnic "tokens" of the ruling party. Because the national government may include many such tokens, coding countries by their level of inclusion is not as straightforward as simply counting the ethnic groups in a cabinet. Some cases are straightforward. For example, Ethiopia's 1952-62 autocratic ethnofederation with Eritrea was highly exclusive: ethnic Amharas dominated the national government, military, and provincial governments (Clapham 1975). By contrast, Ethiopia's post-1991 autocratic ethnofederation is less straightforward: the national legislature was de jure

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[9]National decision-making power in autocratic ethnofederations like Nigeria and Pakistan has resided not in national government institutions (like the legislature) but rather the military (Geddes 1999, Adeney 2007). Assessing Nigeria's ethnic exclusion over time thus requires examining the military's ethnic composition.

inclusive but Ethiopia was de facto exclusive due to ethnic Tigrayan domination of the ruling coalition and security sector (Lyons 2019).

Before proceeding, the relationship between decentralization, ethnic inclusion, and democratization should be clarified. I argue below that the former two affect the latter's occurrence. However, one might object that decentralization and inclusion are in fact *components* of democracy. Indeed, polities seem to become more free as (1) power is decentralized closer to the people and (2) the people are fully included in processes of selecting and removing representatives. This decentralist, inclusive understanding of democracy has informed the US experience, in particular the 18th century Anti-Federalist movement.

If true, this objection would render my argument tautologous: definitional components of an outcome Y cannot explain Y's occurrence. However, it is very possible for national autocrats to decentralize power to sub-national autocrats without changes to the procedures by which either are elected. Similarly, democratic inclusion is very different from the inclusion or co-optation of ethno-national autocrats. Indeed, many of the elites under discussion would view the inclusive democratic ideal as a threat to their power.

Decentralization may actually enhance the center's authoritarian control, e.g., empowering local tyrants. Such tyrants often control peripheral spaces where income and education are low. This will likely render accountability mechanisms that exist in the capital city even less effective. Scholarship on "sub-national authoritarianism" teaches us that autocracy and decentralization need not conflict (Gibson 2013). Similarly, autocracy can co-exist with inclusive, multi-ethnic rule at the center.

In several AEFs, sub-national incumbents have accrued decentralized autonomy. Yet these incumbents governed in an even more authoritarian fashion than their colleagues at the center. For example, Ramzan Kadyrov has enjoyed virtually unchecked power to suppress dissent in Russia's Chechnya Republic since 2007. Between 2010-18, Ethiopia's Somali regional state was ruled by Abdi Illey, who commanded the *Liyu* police, one of Africa's most repressive security forces. Ethiopian national incumbents struggled to control and even arrest Abdi. Finally,

Yogi Adityanath has fashioned Uttar Pradesh into one of India's most authoritarian, anti-Muslim states. In all of these examples, decentralization heralded autocracy, not democracy. Similarly, modest ethnic inclusion has existed alongside autocracy. For example, Nigeria's military-led AEF became both slightly more inclusive of Hausa-Fulanis and more repressive between 1966-79.

Variation in Centralization and Ethnic Exclusion

From a strategic standpoint, it is puzzling that autocratic ethnofederations become more or less centralized and ethnically exclusive (Landry 2008). Why would autocrats decentralize power away from the national government and share power with elites from outside their ethnic group? Centralization and exclusion seem to serve strategic functions, insulating national autocrats from sub-national agitation and inter-ethnic disagreement, respectively. For example, Cameroon's president Ahmadu Ahidjo worked for years to re-centralize power and abrogate the Francophone-Anglophone federation, which he succeeded in doing in 1971. Similarly, Milosevic worked to create a more exclusionary Serb nation in Yugoslavia's AEF. The five existing autocratic ethnofederations –India, Pakistan, Ethiopia, Russia, and Malaysia– have, with some exceptions, been on a centralized trajectory since their inception.

Autocrats have often disguised their preferences for centralized, exclusionary rule through ideological appeals. Bolsheviks denounced sub-national incumbents who demanded greater decentralization as bourgeois enemies of the communist revolution (Connor 1984, Abebe 2016). Indonesia's national elites charged the Dutch-imposed federation with failing to create national unity, which served as a pretext for re-centralization (Bertrand 2004). It is probably safe to assume that strategic national autocrats will only decentralize power to sub-national governments or include diverse ethnic elites in the national government when (a) their position is highly secure, such that decentralization and inclusion are costless, or (b) their position is highly insecure, such that demands for decentralization and inclusion cannot be resisted.

From an historical perspective, autocratic ethnofederations have tended to emerge in polities with histories of unitary governance and ethnic domination (Lake & Rothchild 2005,

Anderson 2012). This led Ghai (2000, 96) to lament "the near impossibility of securing genuine [decentralized] autonomy...[because autocrats are] too avaricious and powerful to allow it. Autonomy is a useful tool for obfuscation and manipulation." In other cases, autocratic ethnofederations were founded by or bequeathed to members of one ethnic group. For example, in Burma, ethnic Burmans were the main negotiating actor with the British during decolonization (Silverstein 1959). Burmans largely excluded other ethnic groups from national power thereafter.

Decentralization and inclusion have sometimes been imposed by international actors, such as in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In other cases, no one group was strong enough to rule the nascent autocratic ethnofederation alone. Powerful elites created "National Fronts" or inclusive coalitions of ethnic parties.[10] Multi-ethnic Fronts were thus strategic concessions until one group was sufficiently powerful to dissolve the Front and exclude other groups. At the same time, powerful groups also benefited from maintaining the veneer of ethnic inclusion in the national government. For example, Czechoslovakia's National Front contained between 6-8 parties, all of whom were subservient to the Czech-dominated Communist Party (Schaeffer 1999). Malaysia's Barisan Nasional included Chinese and Indian parties despite its dominance by ethnic *Bumiputeras*. Much as strong national parties have furthered centralization, strong "senior partners" within national coalitions have furthered ethnic exclusion.

Crises

Crises are events that threaten or challenge the national government's legitimacy or its control over the state (Roeder & Rothchild 2005). For the purposes of my theory, crises can motivate regime changes. As I discuss in section 2.4, I only analyze cases of regime change that were preceded by crises.

The simplest way to think about crises are as exogenous events like mass protests, civil wars, riots, economic crises, or high-profile corruption scandals. For example, in 2007 Pakistan's national government faced a crisis when Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry refused

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[10]These coalitions also stem from Leninist practice, where a "broad, if temporary revolutionary coalition" would entice national groups to remain in the common state (Lapidus 2004, 122).

to resign in spite of President Pervez Musharraf's demands. Chaudhry was placed on house arrest, which was followed by mass protests (the "Lawyers' Movement") (Burki 2010). This crisis ostensibly motivated Pakistan's 2008 liberalization.

Other kinds of crises may be closely related or endogenous to the phenomena of centralization and ethnic exclusion discussed above. In centralized AEFs, sub-national incumbents may grow frustrated due to their lack of autonomy, leading them to denounce the national government or attempt to secede, which can generate crises. For example, centralization in Ethiopia's first AEF (1952-62) motivated violence by Eritrean liberation groups (Iyob 1997). Meanwhile, in exclusive AEFs, marginalized ethnic elites may also denounce or threaten the national government. For example, Javanese elites dominated the national government of Indonesia's short-lived AEF (1949-50) and excluded[11] ethnic minorities like Dayaks; the latter undertook several violent challenges against central rule (Guomenos 2008). Exclusion by Punjabis in Pakistan has led to multiple crises, including East Pakistan's secession in 1971 and insurgency in Balochistan (Ayres 2009).

Different kinds of crises may occur in decentralized, inclusive AEFs. Decentralization strengthens sub-national incumbents, who may use their institutional "weapons" or resources –like police forces– to challenge the national government (Bunce 1999a). For example, after Russia's inception, Boris Yeltsen was compelled to bargain with sub-national governors given the latter's power (Solnick 1998). Meanwhile, greater inclusion may lead to destabilizing, inter-ethnic disagreements.[12] These kinds of crises may or may not be unique to AEF. For the purposes of my theory, crises are important simply because they can motivate democratizing or autocratizing responses.

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[11]This was in spite of Javanese elites publicly eschewing particular ethnic identities in favor of an inclusive, pan-Indonesian identity called *pancasila*.

[12]I assume that inter-ethnic elite preferences diverge more considerably than intra-ethnic preferences. This is because AEFs are often implemented in countries with histories of inter-ethnic violence. Of course, intra-ethnic conflict may still create crises. For example, Gorbachev's reformist efforts were undermined by other Russians like Yegor Ligachyov in the Politburo (Sakwa 2012, Young 1992). Ethiopia's 1952-62 ethnofederation with Eritrea, which was dominated by ethnic Amharas, was destabilized by an attempted coup in 1960 that many Amhara elites supported (Levine 1961).

2.3.2   Explaining Variation in Autocratic Ethnofederal Regime Changes

With a better understanding of centralization, ethnic exclusion, and crises, we can now discuss the mechanisms by which they are connected to regime change. In other words, how exactly does centralization enable autocrats to respond to crises with repression? How exactly does ethnic inclusion disable an effective, repressive response? I answer these questions before asking whether we should think about centralization and exclusion in terms of static levels or dynamic changes.

To restate my argument, crises motivate a response from national government autocrats. Centralization and ethnic exclusion enable incumbent autocrats to resolve crises via repression. Decentralization and ethnic inclusion disable this response and instead compel them to respond with democratic concessions. I assume that national incumbents prefer to maintain the autocratic system and will only democratize under significant pressure. Autocrats in decentralized, inclusive AEFs are more likely to face such pressures. The theoretical diagram from chapter 1 is reproduced in Figure 2.2. The "↓"s indicate that different "institutional structures" affect incumbents' responses to crises.

Before proceeding, the theoretical role of crises should be clarified. Below, I theorize AEF regime changes as responses by national incumbents to crises. This process can seemingly explain an important share of AEF regime changes. However, this does not mean that (a) crises are necessary for regime changes to occur or (b) regime changes are inevitable once crises have occurred.

Crises are not necessary for regime changes to occur, but are rather one among several potential motivating factors. Following the democratization literature, many individual factors can bring about democracy: one actor who prefers democracy may successfully implement it, multiple actors may compromise on democracy, the middle class may demand it, the military may withdraw from politics and permit elections, and so on (Cheibub et al. 2010). Similarly for the universe of AEFs, several factors seem to have motivated regime changes other than crises:

Institutional Structure	Centralization: National incumbents are strong, unobstructed by subnational defiance.	Decentralization: National incumbents are weak, obstructed by subnational defiance.
	Ethnic Exclusion: National incumbents are decisive, unobstructed by ethnic factionalism.	Ethnic Inclusion: National incumbents are indecisive, obstructed by ethnic factionalism.
	⬇	⬇
Response to Crisis (e.g., mass protests)	Autocratization: National incumbents quickly resolve crisis via repression.	Democratization: National incumbents too weak to implement or agree upon resolution. Crisis intensifies, prompting democratic concessions.

Figure 2.2. Explaining regime change in autocratic ethnofederations.

international pressure to hold elections, incumbents' attempts to legitimate the polity through founding elections, and military leaders' willingness to hand power to civilians.

Regime changes are also not inevitable once crises have occurred. National incumbents may weather a crisis without changing the polity's democratic character. Incumbents may instead opt to redistribute wealth, direct the public's attention toward foreign affairs, or create wedges between ethnic groups. Nigeria's 1967-70 Biafra War was a serious crisis, but the military elite did not respond by autocratizing or democratizing. Similarly, during the Pakistan People Party's 2018-13 term, incumbents faced a security crisis stemming from increased terrorist attacks and a more powerful Taliban (Shafqat 2020). But again, these were not followed by regime changes. And as I discuss in chapter 3, Ethiopian national and sub-national incumbents disagreed over wartime strategy during the 1998-2000 Eritrea War. These disagreements and ensuing purges led to a major political crisis, but one that did not prompt regime change.

Regime Change and Combinations of Centralization and Exclusion

To begin, first consider AEFs that are **Centralized and Ethnically Exclusive**. Here the national government monopolizes important policy areas or jurisdictions like security and taxation. Centralization entails that national incumbents will be less reliant upon sub-national incumbents to resolve a crisis. In other words, the crisis's resolution will not depend upon sub-national governments' willingness to lend their revenues or security forces.

In addition, ethnic exclusion renders the core national decision-making body more free from inter-ethnic disagreement and gridlock. National decision-making will be more seamless, as there is less of a need for bargaining between national and sub-national governments and between ethnic elites within the national government. A crisis's resolution will not depend upon the willingness of national incumbent ethnic rivals to agree with one another.

Because national incumbents in centralized and exclusive AEFs are relatively secure in power, they will be less constrained in resolving crises via authoritarian repression. In other words, national incumbents will be able to resist pressures to democratize because centralization renders them strong and exclusion renders them unified. Crises will thus be viewed as opportunities for national incumbents to consolidate power, repress challengers, rig elections in their favor, and limit the freedom of independent news media. National incumbents in centralized, exclusive AEFs may even use the crisis as a pretext to suspend elections or civil liberties.[13] National incumbents can choose to autocratize without worrying about push-back by sub-national incumbents or by ethnic opponents in the national government. Indeed, in centralized and exclusive AEFs, the latter two actors are powerless and marginalized, respectively.

Some examples can illustrate this phenomenon of incumbents in centralized and exclusive AEFs who autocratized in the face of crises. Burma's 1962 autocratization followed challenges –both armed rebellion and secessionist threats– by ethnic minority groups opposed to

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[13]For example, an Ethiopian Oromo opposition leader alleged (Interview 2023) that during two protest crises between 2019-20, national incumbents ordered the police and military to "stay in their barracks...[so as to] unleash anarchy." Such inaction led the protests to become more violent. This not only created a pretext for the national government to supply authoritarian repression, but also a demand from ordinary citizens who were suffering.

the centralized, Burman-dominated status quo (Lintner 1984). Malaysian national incumbents autocratized in both 1969 and 1970 in the face of inter-communal violence. Pakistan's 1978 autocratization followed inter-communal and insurgent violence, which occurred after allegations of vote-rigging during the 1977 elections. Pakistan's 1999 autocratization followed destabilizing gridlock between military and civilian leaders over the selection of an army chief, which led to a military coup. And India's 2019 autocratization under BJP rule followed mass protests after the parliament ratified the Citizenship Amendment Act, a bill with ostensibly anti-Muslim content. I attempt to show in chapters 3 and 5 that Ethiopian national incumbents autocratized in response to mass protest crises. In all eight of these cases, centralization and ethnic exclusion appear to have served as crucial conditions that enabled national incumbents to autocratize.

Next consider AEFs that are **Decentralized and Ethnically Inclusive**. In these systems, the national government monopolizes fewer important policy jurisdictions. This means that national incumbents will be more reliant upon sub-national incumbents to resolve a crisis. The crisis's resolution will likely depend upon sub-national governments' willingness to lend their revenues or security forces.

In addition, ethnic inclusion will render the core national decision-making body more obstructed by inter-ethnic disagreement and gridlock. National decision-making will be less seamless, as there is more of a need for bargaining between national and sub-national governments and between ethnic elites within the national government. The crisis's resolution will depend upon the willingness of national incumbent ethnic rivals to agree with one another.

Because national incumbents in decentralized, inclusive AEFs are less secure in power, they will have a harder time resolving crises via authoritarian repression. Authority is fractured, both between national and sub-national governments and among different ethnic elites within the national government. This will serve to prolong and intensify the crisis. As a result, national leaders may feel compelled to cede power and democratize as a last resort. This involves scaling back repression, legalizing opposition parties, and releasing dissidents from prison. The hope is that these kinds of responses appease challengers and stabilize the polity. As Nelson (2022, 118)

notes with respect to Pakistan, when "martial law fails to quell...protest [crises]...military leaders [end up] handing power back to civilians via elections."

It is clear why national autocrats would seek to consolidate their power and autocratize in centralized and exclusive AEFs. But it is less clear why autocrats would make democratic concessions to resolve a crisis in decentralized, inclusive AEFs. Would they not prefer any other measure –such as symbolic changes or economic redistribution– to avoid giving citizens more rights and democratic freedoms?

Democratic concessions serve several functions in helping to resolve crises. Most obviously, concessions may appease domestic actors who demand them. This includes pro-democracy mass protesters or belligerents in a civil war. Or, facing an economic crisis, democratic concessions can appease the international community upon whose financial assistance autocrats depend.

Of course, making democratic concessions is a risky game, one that Roeder (1993) calls the "Oligarch's Dilemma." As in the Prisoner's Dilemma, national autocrats are incentivized to "defect" from the autocratic status quo and further democratize in order to increase their support base. Yet the threat of defection leads to mutual defection and in turn greater democratization. At a certain point in this game, national incumbents no longer enjoy a privileged position. (Note that in centralized, exclusive AEFs, national incumbents do not need to play this game.)

Some examples help illustrate this phenomenon of decentralized and inclusive AEFs democratizing in the face of crises. Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia all liberalized after the Revolutions of 1989. And in all three cases, liberalization was followed by state collapse and then the creation of some new democratic states, such as the Czech, Lithuanian, and Slovenian Republics. (This point should not be overstated, as the communist breakups also produced authoritarian successor states like Turkmenistan and Albania.) I show in chapter 4 that Ethiopia liberalized after four years of destabilizing protests. In all of these cases, decentralization and ethnic inclusion appear to have rendered national incumbents weak and fractured, preventing them from responding to crises with authoritarian repression.

Finally, there is the matter of "off-diagonal" cases, or rather the AEFs that are **Centralized and Ethnic Inclusive** or **Decentralized and Ethnically Exclusive**. There have been zero cases in the former category and two in the latter. I do not have strong expectations for these cases. However, they can be seemingly be explained according to the heuristic that "One factor overpowers (or makes a greater difference than) the other." Recall from above that decentralization and exclusion are theoretically related to democratization and autocratization, respectively. So if decentralization is especially salient to the politics of country *C*, these may "overpower" the forces of exclusion, leading to democratization. By contrast, if exclusion is especially salient in *C*, then autocratization may be more likely.

To see this, consider Russia in the early 1990s, which became decentralized and ethnically exclusive after its inception. This is because Russia inherited a weak national government from the Soviet Union. This fact was extremely salient at the time of its independence. Some observers even predicted that Russia would collapse due to the growing power of its new Republics (Ross 2003). By contrast, Russia did not inherit the Soviet Union's ethno-national diversity, rendering it ethnically exclusive. This was a more incidental fact and less salient to Russian politics at the time. In other words, Russia's decentralization overpowered or made a greater difference than its domination by Russians. In this decentralized state of affairs, Russia partially democratized in 1992. Thereafter, Moscow began re-centralizing power, which it has continued to do up to the present. This may suggest that the off-diagonal cells are transitory or unstable phases in an AEF's life cycle.

Centralization and Exclusion: Levels or Trends?

It should now be more intuitive that "different combinations of centralization and ethnic exclusion affect whether AEF incumbents respond to crises with democracy or autocracy." But should we think about these combinations in a static or dynamic sense? The above discussion suggests two hypotheses:

(H1): In AEFs with high *levels* of centralization and ethnic exclusion, incumbents are more likely

to respond to crises with authoritarian repression. In AEFs with low levels, incumbents are more likely to respond with democratic concessions. The static position where an AEF is located at the time of regime change is what affects incumbents' opportunities.

(H2): In AEFs that *become increasingly* centralized and ethnically exclusive, incumbents are more likely to respond to crises with authoritarian repression. In AEFs that become increasingly decentralized and inclusive, incumbents are more likely to respond with democratic concessions. The dynamic trends, trajectories, or changes leading up to regime change are what affect incumbents' opportunities.

As I discuss in section 2.4 and Appendix A, the vast majority of AEFs can be thought of in terms *(H1)*. What seemingly affected autocrats' responses to crises were levels of centralization and exclusion at the time of regime change. High or low levels empowered or constrained autocrats, respectively. For example, at the time of its 1969 Malay-Chinese riot crisis (the "13 May Incident"), Malaysia's AEF was characterized by high levels of centralization and exclusionary, *Bumiputera* rule. The *(H1)* approach offers a simple way to think about why Malaysian incumbents responded with repression. By contrast, the *(H2)* approach seems convoluted for our purposes. It is true that after independence, Malaysia's Barisan Nasional ruling coalition found inventive ways to *increase* centralization and exclusion. However, the trends themselves seem less important than the fact that, when faced with crises, Malaysian incumbents were aided by high levels of centralization and exclusion.

In at least three cases, however, *(H2)* offers a better way to think about regime change sequences. These are Czechoslovakia after the 1989 Velvet Revolution, the Soviet Union after Gorbachev's 1985 reforms, and Ethiopia after the death of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi in 2012. Each of these cases were characterized by *increasing* decentralization and inclusion after the events in question. However, it would be inaccurate to say that all three were characterized by high levels of decentralization and inclusion. To see this, consider the Soviet Union, which democratized in 1990. It is true that after 1985, levels of centralization and exclusion were

lower than during the Stalinist period. But it would be inaccurate to say that both the USSR and Yugoslavia had absolutely low levels. Indeed, the Soviet constitution permitted considerably less decentralization than Yugoslavia's, while Russians were in a much more dominant position in the USSR than were Serbs in Yugoslavia. We should remember that these three cases are distinctive. This helps keep the theory simple. Otherwise, we would need to conceptualize "intermediate" levels to make sense of the diversity of AEFs.

Although trends or trajectories are more empirically "slippery" concepts, the aforementioned three cases do not involve long trends with unclear beginning and end points. Indeed, in Czechoslovakia, the USSR, and Ethiopia, democratization episodes occurred 1, 5, and 6 years after the relevant trends began. All three cases are attached to very concrete events, namely mass protests, historic reforms, and a prime minister's death.

2.4 Cross-National Analysis

In this section I operationalize each theoretical component and analyze the universe of AEFs. This exploratory exercise helps us circumscribe the universe of cases and identify patterns in incumbents' responses to crises. I first list the universe of AEFs. I then code AEFs in terms of their centralization and ethnic exclusion. I then list the universe of AEF democratization and autocratization episodes, identifying those that were (not) preceded by crises. In other words, I move from AEFs to AEFs that underwent regime changes to AEFs that underwent regime changes in the face of crises. Finally, I discuss the patterns that emerge from my analysis.

2.4.1 Measurement

Table 2.1. Universe of Autocratic Ethnofederations, 1922-Present. * denotes borderline AEFs (see Appendix B). † denotes AEFs that did not undergo regime changes, which are excluded from my analysis.

Country	Years	Origins	Outcome
BiH	1995-97	International Imposition	Democratization
Burma*	1948-62	Colonial Imposition	Re-centralization
Cameroon†	1961-72	Colonial Imposition	Re-centralization
Czechoslovakia	1969-90	Solution to Unitarism	Democratization (Breakup in 1992)
Ethiopia*†	1952-62	International Imposition	Re-centralization
Ethiopia	1991-	Solution to Unitarism	Intact
India	1947-52	Colonial Imposition	Democratization
India	1975-77	"The Emergency"	Democratization
India	2017-	BJP Ascendancy	Intact
Indonesia*†	1949-50	Colonial Imposition	Re-centralization
Malaysia†	1963-65	Colonial Imposition	Secession (Singapore Expulsion)
Malaysia*	1965-	Prior Ethnofederal Breakup	Intact
Nigeria	1960-79	Colonial imposition	Democratization (Second Republic)
Nigeria	1983-99	Military Coup	Democratization (Fourth Republic)
Pakistan†	1947-71	Colonial Imposition	Secession (Bangladesh)
Pakistan	1977-	Prior Ethnofederal Breakup	Intact
Russia	1991-	Prior Ethnofederal Breakup	Intact
Serbia-Montenegro	1992-2001	Prior Ethnofederal Breakup	Democratization, (Montenegro Secession in 2006)
Soviet Union	1922-91	Solution to Unitarism	Secession (Multiple)
Tanzania*	1964-95	Voluntary Merger	Democratization
Yugoslavia	1945-92	Solution to Unitarism	Secession (Multiple)

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Table 2.1 displays the universe of AEFs since 1922. To measure autocracy, I use data from V-Dem's continuous "Polyarchy" measure, where scores $< .05$ = autocracy. Once a country exceeds the .05 threshold, it is removed from my dataset. For example, India is removed when Indira Gandhi's period of Emergency rule ends in 1977 and added in 2017 when rule by the Bharatiya Janata Party becomes authoritarian.

To count ethnofederations, I use data from Roeder (2009) and Anderson (2012). Appendix B discusses cases included in Table 2.1 that may be better characterized as federacies or territorial federations. Once a country experiences an ethnofederal breakup, it is removed from the data set. For example, Malaysia is listed twice because its first AEF with Singapore led to the latter's secession in 1965. AEFs that did not undergo regime changes are excluded from my analysis.

Table 2.2 displays the universe of autocratic ethnofederations according to their central- ization and ethnic exclusion. Appendix A justifies my coding choices for each AEF. I measure centralization using individual case studies. This is due to data limitations: the most comprehen- sive data set on centralization –Hooghe et al.'s (2016) Regional Authority Index– does a better job at capturing de jure centralization. Hooghe et al. is also limited in its geographical coverage.

I code AEFs as 'centralized' when (a) sub-national autonomy is effectively meaningless or (b) the national government is significantly more powerful yet sub-national autonomy is meaningful. Burma's 1948-62 AEF exemplified (a), as the federal government prevented states like Shan and Kachin from exercising their constitutional autonomy. Meanwhile, Malaysia's contemporary AEF exemplifies (b): the federal government enjoys extensive political and economic power, but specific states like Selangor and Penang enjoy de facto autonomy owing to their high economic development. By contrast, I code AEFs as 'decentralized' when the sub-national governments are as powerful or more powerful than the national government. For example, Bosnia and Herzegovina was a decentralized AEF prior to its democratization because the sub-national governments enjoyed constitutional control over key jurisdictions like taxation and security.

I measure ethnic exclusion using Vogt et al.'s (2015) Ethnic Power Relations (EPR)

Table 2.2. Centralization and ethnic exclusion in autocratic ethnofederations. Sources: Vogt et al. (2015) and case studies. ** denotes cases where it is more instructive to think of trends instead of levels.

Country	Institutional Structure
BiH	Decentralization & Inclusion
Burma	Centralization & Exclusion
Cameroon	Centralization & Exclusion
Czechoslovakia (1969-89)	Centralization & Exclusion
Czechoslovakia (1989-90)**	Decentralization & Inclusion
Ethiopia (1952-62)	Centralization & Exclusion
Ethiopia (1991-2012)	Centralization & Exclusion
Ethiopia (2012-18)**	Decentralization & Inclusion
Ethiopia (2018-22)	Centralization & Exclusion
India (1947-52)	Centralization & Exclusion
India (1975-77)	Centralization & Exclusion
India (2017-)	Centralization & Exclusion
Indonesia	Centralization & Exclusion
Malaysia (1963-65)	Centralization & Exclusion
Malaysia (1963-65)	Centralization & Exclusion
Nigeria (1966-78)	Centralization & Exclusion
Nigeria (1983-99)	Centralization & Exclusion
Pakistan (1947-71)	Centralization & Exclusion
Pakistan (1977-71)	Centralization & Exclusion
Russia (1991-3)	Decentralization & Exclusion
Russia (1993-)	Centralization & Exclusion
Serbia-Montenegro	Decentralization & Exclusion
Soviet Union (1922-85)	Centralization & Exclusion
Soviet Union (1985-91)**	Decentralization & Inclusion
Tanzania	Centralization & Exclusion
Yugoslavia (1945-74)	Centralization & Exclusion
Yugoslavia (1974-91)	Decentralization & Inclusion

data set as well as the case study literature. For our purposes, EPR codes ethnic groups as dominant, senior partners, or junior partners. Dominant groups are those who rule with only "limited inclusion of token members of other groups who however do not have real influence on decision making" (Vogt et al. 2015, 5). Examples of dominant groups include Javanese in Indonesia's defunct AEF and mainlanders in Tanzania's AEF prior to democratization. Senior partners are groups who control most top executive positions. Meanwhile, junior partners control few executive positions. Examples of senior and junior partners are Punjabis and Mohajirs in Pakistan, respectively.

I code AEFs as 'exclusive' when there is a dominant group or one senior partner. By contrast, I code them as 'inclusive' when multiple senior partners vie for power. As an example of the latter, consider Josip Tito's purges of Serbs from Yugoslavia's League of Communists in 1966. Thereafter, Croats, Bosniaks, Macedonians, and Montenegrins were on a more equal footing with Serbs.

Before proceeding, recall that in at least three cases, the key to understanding regime changes are *trends* or changes in decentralization and inclusion. These trends involved significantly weakening the federal government and "senior [ethnic group] partner." The result was to disable national incumbents from effectively responding to crises with repression. In Czechoslovakia, the Velvet Revolution removed the USSR's veto, empowering the Slovak Republic –which had hitherto enjoyed minimal autonomy– as well as Slovak ethnic elites. In the USSR, Gorbachev's reforms decentralized power to the Republics and empowered non-Russian elites. And in Ethiopia, Meles Zenawi's death empowered Amhara and Oromo sub-national incumbents who began carving out economic and political autonomy. None of these trends lasted longer than 6 years.

The vast majority of AEFs have been centralized and exclusive. This is not surprising given that AEFs tend to be implemented in polities with histories of unitary rule and ethnic domination. But as Table 2.2 indicates, the same country can embody different combinations of centralization and ethnic exclusion over time. For example, after its decentralized period,

Russia became centralized in 1993 when the federal government gained control over wayward Republics.

Table 2.3. 26 democratization episodes. Source: V-Dem. Boldface cases are those where a crisis ostensibly motivated regime change. Non-boldface cases are excluded from my analysis.

Country, Year	Regime Change Type	Crisis
BiH, 1996	Closed autocracy → electoral autocracy	N/A (International pressure)
BiH, 1997	Electoral autocracy → electoral democracy	N/A (International pressure)
Burma, 1951	Closed autocracy → electoral autocracy	N/A (Founding elections)
Czechoslovakia, 1990	**Closed autocracy → liberal democracy**	**Mass protests ("Velvet Revolution")**
Ethiopia, 2018	**Electoral autocracy → liberalization**	**Mass protests ("Oromo protests")**
India, 1951	Closed autocracy → electoral autocracy	N/A (Constitution implemented)
India, 1952	Electoral autocracy → electoral democracy	N/A (Founding elections)
India, 1977	**Electoral autocracy → electoral democracy**	**Mass protests (against "The Emergency")**
Malaysia, 1972	Closed autocracy → liberalization	N/A ("Emergency Ordinance" relaxed)
Malaysia, 1974	Closed autocracy → electoral autocracy	N/A ("Emergency Ordinance" ends)
Malaysia, 2018	Electoral autocracy → liberalization	N/A (Alternation in power, new government liberalizes)
Nigeria, 1979	Closed autocracy → electoral autocracy	N/A (Military transfers power to civilians)
Nigeria, 1980	Electoral autocracy → liberalization	N/A (Civilian rule deepens)
Nigeria, 1999	Closed autocracy → electoral democracy	N/A (Military transfers power to civilians)
Pakistan, 1977	Closed autocracy → electoral autocracy	N/A (Scheduled elections)
Pakistan, 1985	**Closed autocracy → electoral autocracy**	**Mass protests ("Movement for Restoration of Democracy")**
Pakistan, 1989	Electoral autocracy → liberalization	N/A (Military transfers power to civilians after Zia's death)
Pakistan, 2002	Closed autocracy → electoral autocracy	N/A (Scheduled elections)
Pakistan, 2003	Electoral autocracy → liberalization	N/A (Scheduled elections)
Pakistan, 2008	**Electoral autocracy → liberalization**	**Mass protests (Lawyers' Movement)**
Russia, 1992	Electoral autocracy → electoral democracy	N/A (Founding elections)
Serbia-Montenegro, 2001	**Electoral autocracy → electoral democracy**	**Mass protests ("Bulldozer Revolution")**
Soviet Union, 1990	**Closed autocracy → liberalization**	**Mass protests (1989 Revolutions)**
Tanzania, 1992	Electoral autocracy → liberalization	N/A (International pressure)
Tanzania, 1995	Electoral autocracy → electoral democracy	N/A (International pressure)
Yugoslavia, 1990	**Closed autocracy → liberalization**	**Ethnic violence**

Table 2.4. 15 autocratization episodes. Source: V-Dem. Boldface cases are those where a crisis ostensibly motivated regime change. Non-boldface cases are excluded from my analysis.

Country, Year	Regime Change Type	Crisis
Burma, 1962	**Electoral autocracy → closed autocracy**	**Shan secessionist threats**
Ethiopia, 2005[a]	**Electoral autocracy → regression**	**Mass protests (after elections)**
Ethiopia, 2019[b]	**Electoral autocracy → regression**	**Mass protests, attempted coup**
India, 2019	**Electoral autocracy → regression**	**Mass protests (anti-"Citizenship Act Amendement")**
Malaysia, 1969	**Closed autocracy → regression**	**Inter-communal violence ("13 May Incident")**
Malaysia, 1970	**Electoral autocracy → closed autocracy**	**Inter-communal violence ("13 May Incident")**
Malaysia, 2020	Electoral autocracy → regression	N/A (New government backslides)
Nigeria, 1983	**Electoral autocracy → regression**	**Political instability (prompting Buhari coup)**
Nigeria, 1984	**Electoral autocracy → closed autocracy**	**Political instability (prompting Buhari coup)**
Pakistan, 1978	**Electoral autocracy → closed autocracy**	**Political instability (prompting Zia coup)**
Pakistan, 1999	**Electoral autocracy → closed autocracy**	**Political instability (prompting Musharraf coup)**
Pakistan, 2000	Closed autocracy → regression	Political instability (prompting Musharraf coup)
Russia, 1993	**Electoral democracy → electoral autocracy**	**Constitutional crisis**
Russia, 2000	**Electoral autocracy → regression**	**Chechen War**
Tanzania, 1965	Electoral autocracy → regression	N/A (Nyerere government consolidates power)

[a]This change is not evident in the Electoral Democracy Index but is captured by alternative indices, e.g., decreased freedom of assembly and civil liberties.
[b]See footnote a.

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Table 2.3 and Table 2.4 display the universe of regime changes under autocratic ethnofederalism, 26 democratizing changes and 15 autocratizing changes. Note that I count any change in the direction of democracy (autocracy) as a democratizing (autocratizing) change. For example, liberalization under closed autocracy counts as a democratizing change. This does not mean the country in question became a democracy, only that it became more democratic.

I use data from V-Dem's (2021) ordinal "Regimes of the World" (RoW) measure to capture qualitative regime changes (e.g., from electoral autocracy → closed autocracy). To capture incremental changes (e.g., the liberalization of an electoral autocracy), I use data from V-Dem's continuous "Polyarchy" (EDI) measure, looking at changes > .05 within an RoW category.[14] Appendix B discusses regime change episodes that may represent V-Dem coding errors. Note that regime changes did not occur in the following AEFs: Cameroon, Ethiopia's first AEF (1952-62), Indonesia, Malaysia's first AEF (1963-65), and Pakistan's first AEF (1958-71). These are excluded from my analysis.

Finally, the rightmost column in Table 2.3 and Table 2.4 indicates the presence of crises. If a crisis preceded regime change, it is briefly described and the entire case is boldfaced. For example, Czechoslovakia's 1990 democratization was preceded by mass protests associated with the Velvet Revolution. Only the cases where crises preceded regime change are included in my analysis.

If there is not a discernible crisis, then "N/A" is followed by a brief description of the likely alternative factor that prompted regime change. For example, Tanzania's 1965 autocratization was not ostensibly motivated by a crisis. Instead, it stemmed from efforts by Julius Nyerere's government to consolidate economic and political control. Again, the (non-boldfaced) cases where regime changes were not preceded by crises are excluded from my analysis. Appendix A discusses each regime change case and crisis in more detail.

I rely on the case study literature to measure crises. This is not always straightforward. Indeed, it is usually possible to find some challenging event or process faced by national

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[14]I use a higher threshold than Maerz et al. (2021) (which uses X > .01) so as to locate more substantial changes.

incumbents prior to regime change. However, not all such events are crises.

To determine whether an event was in fact a crisis, I first focused on timing. In other words, how exactly did challenging events precede democratizing and autocratizing responses? Can the event and response be plausibly linked? To see the importance of timing, consider Malaysia's 2018 liberalization. Democratic concessions followed the "1MDB" corruption scandal, which seriously challenged the Barisan Nasional (BN) ruling coalition and led to mass protests. 1MDB seems like a plausible candidate for a crisis. However, BN was voted out in 2018 after six decades of rule. Liberalization was undertaken by Pakatan Harapan, the BN's successor. The new Pakatan incumbents did not ostensibly enact democratic reforms out of concern for a challenge faced by their BN predecessors. Thus, Malaysia's 2018 liberalization is excluded from my analysis.

In addition to timing, I focused on the salience of different challenging events. In other words, out of the set of events or processes that plausibly challenged national incumbents, which of these were most significant? Many of the AEFs under consideration are poor and regularly face economic shocks. However, not all such shocks have been so salient as to motivate regime changes. To see this, consider BiH, which democratized in 1996. At the time, BiH incumbents faced an economic crisis stemming from the aftermath of the Bosnian War. However, this was not arguably the salient factor that prompted democratization. Instead, international pressure seems to have been more decisive. Thus, BiH's 1996 and 1997 democratizations are excluded from my analysis.

Measuring crises across time and space is difficult. Indeed, what counted as a crisis in Pakistan under military rule in the 1970s may differ considerably from what counted as a crisis in Yugoslavia in the 1980s or in Ethiopia during the 2000s. One strength of the subsequent three case study chapters is that they allow us to hold constant these different historical contexts.

Of the 26 democratization episodes, only 8 appear to have been preceded by crises that motivated democratic concessions. In the other 17 episodes, the decisive factor seems to have been international pressure to hold elections (BiH and Tanzania), incumbents' desire to hold

founding elections (Burma and India), the holding of scheduled elections that military leaders did not find threatening (Pakistan), and the military's propensity to hand power to civilian leaders (Nigeria and Pakistan) or to terminate emergency rule (Malaysia). In the 8 episodes where crises did occur, democratic concessions were mostly motivated by mass protests (6 cases).

By contrast, of the 15 autocratization episodes, 13 do seem to have been motivated by crises. 5 of these involved mass protests or inter-communal violence (Ethiopia, India, and Malaysia). Another 5 were motivated by instability between political and military elites, which eventually lead to autocratizing military coups (Nigeria and Pakistan).

2.4.2 Empirical Patterns

Table 2.5 shows the patterns that emerge from my analysis of 21 cases of AEF regime changes that were preceded by crises. Cases without crises are excluded. The columns represent different combinations of centralization and exclusion and the rows represent different regime change outcomes.

Table 2.5. Patterns of regime change under autocratic ethnofederalism. Regime changes not preceded by crises are excluded.

	Centralization & Exclusion (Expectation: Autocratization)	**Decentralization & Inclusion** (Expectation: Democratization)	**Off-Diagonal Cases** (No strong expectations)
Autocratization	*Confirming Cases* (13): Burma 1962 Ethiopia 2005, 2019 India 2019 Malaysia 1969, 1970 Nigeria 1983, 1984 Pakistan 1978, 1999, 2000 Russia 1993, 2000	*Disconfirming Cases* (0): No cases	No cases.
Democratization	*Disconfirming Cases* (3): India 1977 Pakistan 1985, 2008	*Confirming Cases* (4): Czechoslovakia 1990 Ethiopia 2018 Soviet Union 1990 Yugoslavia 1990	Serbia-Montenegro 2001 (Decentralized & exclusive.)

These patterns suggest –but do not test– that there is preliminary support for my general theory. Decentralization and ethnic inclusion seem to make it harder for autocrats to resist democratizing pressures in the face of crises. Indeed, 100% (4/4) of these cases conform with my expectations. In Czechoslovakia, Ethiopia, the Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia, national incumbents made democratic concessions in the face of mass protests or ethnic violence. That incumbents were constrained in their ability to autocratize seems related to defiant sub-national governments and ethnic factionalism. However, this is a small number of cases. More in-depth analysis is required to establish a plausible connection between each component of the theoretical sequence.

It also seems plausible that centralization and ethnic exclusion make it easier for autocrats to resist democratizing pressures. Indeed, 81% (13/16) of these cases conform with my expectations. In all 13 of these cases, autocrats in centralized, exclusive AEFs deployed repression in response to serious crises. This includes Burma's 1962 descent into military rule that followed secessionist threats, Malaysia's imposition of Emergency Rule in 1969 that followed inter-communal violence, Pakistan's 1978 military coup that followed inter-communal violence, and the BJP's 2019 autocratization in India that followed mass protests.

The disconfirming cases need not necessarily decrease our confidence in the theory. For example, India's 1977 democratization arguably reflected the state's difficulty in indefinitely deploying Emergency Rule. Given India's size, diversity, and democratic history, perhaps no amount of centralization and ethnic exclusion could have enabled Indira Gandhi's government to continue the Emergency. Moving to Pakistan, its 1985 democratization arguably reflected Zia-ul-Haq's confidence that elections would not threaten his grip on power. It is true that Zia's regime faced a mass protest crisis and was both centralized and exclusive at the time. However, he only conceded elections on the condition that all acts and ordinances passed by him would not be subject to judicial challenges thereafter.

At the same time, some of the confirming cases may not increase our confidence in the theory. For example, India's 2019 autocratization occurred in the face of mass protests against

the Citizenship Amendment Act and under centralized, exclusionary conditions. But perhaps autocratization had less to do with centralization and exclusion and more to do with elements of the BJP's Hindu nationalism that are inhospitable to liberal democracy (Hansen 2019). More detailed analysis is required to understand the theory's empirical reach.

2.5   Conclusion

This chapter offered an explanation of democratic change in countries that are both autocratic and ethnofederal. I began with the observation that many regime changes in autocratic ethnofederations (AEFs) have been motivated by crises, like mass protests or inter-communal violence. In some cases, regime changes were not preceded by crises, while in others crises were resolved without democratization or autocratization. However, an important share can be understood in terms of responses to crises. I thus omitted cases where crises did not precede regime change.

I hypothesized the importance of centralization and ethnic exclusion, which affect how national incumbents respond to crises. Different combinations make it more or less probable that national incumbents can resist democratizing pressures in the face of crises. I thus made an "AND" argument about the conjunction or combination of two factors –centralization AND exclusion– in affecting elite decisions during crisis periods.

Even though they are distinct phenomena, centralization and exclusion (and decentralization and inclusion) tend to be highly correlated. The theory thus began by analyzing each type of AEF. In centralized and exclusive AEFs, I hypothesized that national government incumbents are more likely to respond to crises with authoritarian repression. This is because centralization strengthens national incumbents and exclusion renders them ethnically unified and free from indecision. By contrast, in decentralized and inclusive AEFs, I hypothesized that national incumbents are unable to resolve crises with repression. This is because decentralization weakens them and inclusion renders them plagued by ethnic factionalism. As the crisis drags on, national

incumbents may be compelled to respond with democratic concessions in order to end it.

The patterns that emerged from my analysis of the universe of AEF regime changes offered initial support for the theory. First, decentralization and ethnic inclusion do appear to promote democratic transitions: in 100% (4/4 cases) of the decentralized, inclusive AEFs that faced crises prior to regime change, incumbents democratized. This included significant democratization episodes, like those in the Communist federations of Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia. However, the small number of cases demands more in-depth analysis.

On the other hand, centralization and ethnic exclusion appear to enable authoritarian backlash in the face of crises. Indeed, in 81% of the centralized, exclusive AEFs that faced crises prior to regime change, incumbents responded with authoritarian repression. This includes significant autocratization episodes, like the twentieth century coups in Burma, Nigeria, Pakistan, where military leaders responded to mass protests or legislative gridlock.

Although this cross-national support is promising, it is necessary to pay greater attention to actual regime change sequences. Subsequent, Ethiopia-focused chapters do exactly this, looking at how different combinations of centralization and exclusion worked to strengthen or weaken Ethiopian national incumbents during crises. By tracing the processes by which these factors affected regime change, each case helps enrich and refine the theory.

2.6 Appendix A: Coding Choices for Centralization, Ethnic Exclusion, and Crises

This appendix justifies my coding choices for the universe of AEFs. First, I characterize each AEF country in terms of its centralization and ethnic exclusion. Second, I discuss the relevant crises preceding regime changes. Third, I discuss whether different combinations of centralization and exclusion can help make sense of incumbents' responses to crises. Because of space limitations, the third part of each country description is necessarily brief. The subsequent three chapters more extensively look for the presence (absence) of mechanisms linking central-

ization, exclusion, and crises to regime change. An [†] denotes AEFs that did not undergo regime changes, which are excluded from my analysis in section 2.4.

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Decentralization and Inclusion

BiH was created as a "radically decentralized" federation (Keil 2013, 178). For example, Article 3.1 of the constitution does not afford the national government any responsibilities over the military or taxation (Keil 2013). This was due to the constituent groups having such different preferences over federalism: Bosniaks, the largest group, sought a centralized federation that they could control, Serbs sought independence, and Croats sought unification with Croatia or independence (Anderson 2012). Two of the three groups were thus uninterested in federating. The 1995 Dayton Agreement was a decentralized compromise between these three positions. BiH's federation became more centralized primarily after democratization (Keil 2013).

BiH's constitution also created institutions for de jure ethnic inclusion. Thus, Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats all served as senior partners in the national government. Bosniaks have regularly been charged with ethnic domination, but many of these charges have come after democratization, before which time the international community monitored BiH for indications of Bosniak domination (Keil 2013, Vanjek 2020).

BiH was decentralized and inclusive as it underwent democratic change in both 1996 and 1997. At first glance, national incumbents were challenged by the post-war economic crisis. 1996 and 1997 would seem to be confirming cases. However, democratization may be more accurately explained by international pressure on BiH to hold free and fair elections (Weller & Wolff 2006). Domestic crises and the institutions of AEF appear less relevant to understand these democratizations.

Burma: Centralization and Exclusion

Burma's 1947 Panlong Agreement promised decentralized autonomy to non-Burmese minorities like the Shah, Kachin, Chin. The resultant constitution even stipulating the right

to secession. However, Burma functioned as a highly centralized AEF, so much so that some scholars have coded it as a federacy instead of an ethnofederation (Anderson 2012). The core, ethnic Burmese unit was simultaneously the central government unit (Silverstein 1959). Leading ethnic Burmese politicians and their constituents desired a unitary system (Smith 2007, Bhattacharyya 2020). The federation was continuously re-centralized and then terminated after a military coup in 1962 (Kipgen 2011).

Burma's AEF became more exclusive over time as ethnic Burmans cemented their grip on power. Between 1948-58, the Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) data set codes Burmans as serving as "senior partners" alongside Shan and Chin "junior partners (Vogt et al. 2015, Silverstein 1959). In 1958, Burma's Prime Minister dismissed Shan and Chin representatives from government, accusing them of supporting his (communist) opponents (Lintner 1984). Burmans are henceforth coded as "dominant" instead of senior partners.

Burma's 1951 liberalization is perhaps best explained by Burma's attempt to legitimate its post-colonial order and hold founding elections. Burmese national incumbents did face various insurgent challenges but it does not seem like democratic concessions were responses thereto. For this reason, I exclude the 1951 case from my analysis.

The 1962 autocratization more clearly confirms my theoretical sequence. Shan minority leaders challenged the national incumbents by making secessionist claims (Silverstein 1959). The Burmese-dominated military –which was already frustrated with federalism– considered this a serious crisis. It responded with a coup and authoritarian repression (Kipgen 2011).

Cameroon[†]: Centralization and Exclusion

Cameroon's AEF was created in 1961 to integrate former French and British possessions during decolonization (Konings & Nyamnjoh 1997). Francophones' greater size and history of political power was juxtaposed to Anglophones' rushed and disorganized incorporation into federal negotiations. As a consequence, the resultant Anglophone unit was weak and incapable relative to the national government. In addition to this de jure centralization, Francophone

president Ahidjo proved adept at undermining Anglophone power. He played Anglophone factions against one another and replaced the Anglophone president with a unitarist who supported his centralist ambitions. Ahidjo repeatedly called for federalism's abrogation as essential to Cameroon's unity. In 1972, a referendum accomplished just that, which the Francophone population overwhelmingly supported. Cameroon's regime neither democratized nor autocratized during its AEF period. However, Cameroon's centralized, exclusive nature may help us understand why national incumbents were empowered to abrogate the federation with relative ease.

Czechoslovakia: Centralization and Exclusion (1969-89), Decentralization and Inclusion (1989-90)

Czechoslovakia's multiple Communist-era constitutions empowered the national government to veto any law passed by the sub-national governments (Cox et al. 1995). Meanwhile, the highly centralized Communist Party worked to undermine sub-national autonomy after the two units federated in 1969 (Leff 2014). Nevertheless, the Czech and Slovakia socialist republics both enjoyed constitutional autonomy over sub-national defense forces, a fact that would prove highly consequential in the coming decades as federalism became more fragile (Bunce 1999b). In addition, the need to include Slovak representatives –who embraced decentralization– in the national government and Communist Party served as a check against complete centralization (Illner 2013).

After its inception, Czechs consolidated their role as "senior partners" in the national government and Communist party alongside "junior" Slovak partners (Kraus 2016). This led to significant Slovak resentment, ultimately contributing to Czechoslovakia's dissolution after democratization (Illner 2013).

Czechoslovakia became increasingly decentralized and inclusive during the the 1989 Velvet Revolution (Cox et al. 1995). (As discussed above, it is instructive to think about these developments in terms of trends instead of levels. In other words, Czechoslovakia did not

necessarily embody low levels of decentralization and inclusion, but rather made significant changes in this direction.) Communist politicians were ousted and the USSR's de facto veto ended. This permitted more effective sub-national autonomy, especially the Slovak Republic's prerogative to veto Czech initiatives (Hughes 2017). National incumbents were challenged by mass protests, in addition to the burdens of economic liberalization. These burdens were compounded by Czech and Slovak politicians offering radically different economic blueprints (Schaeffer 1999). In what seems to be a confirming case, national incumbents responded to the Velvet Revolution crisis with democratic concessions.

Ethiopia: Centralization and Exclusion (1952-62, 1991-2012, 2018-22), Decentralization and Inclusion (2006-18)

Ethiopia's 1952-62 federation with Eritrea was characterized by Haile Selassie's centralized, exclusionary rule. Eritrea's quest for sub-national autonomy was consistently thwarted. The 1955 constitution heavily concentrated power at the center, leading some to characterize Ethiopia's first AEF as a federacy. For example, Article 4 stated that "By virtue of His Imperial Blood, as well as by the anointing he has received, the person of the Emperor is sacred...and His power indisputable" (Zewde 2001, 206). Selassie's regime not only resisted implementing the federal arrangement, but also filled the Eritrean government with unitarists who helped dismantle ethnofederalism altogether. Haile Selassie's government was exclusionary in its control by Amharas and promotion of Amhara culture, such as the Amharic language and Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity. Ethiopia's first AEF did not undergo any regime changes.

The next three chapters discuss Ethiopia's AEF in detail. I find that each of its three 21st century regime changes can be explained by different combinations of centralization and ethnic exclusion, which affected how national incumbents responded to serious crises.

India: Centralization and Exclusion

Despite its reputation as one of the oldest and most inspiring democracies, India has at several times resorted to authoritarian rule. These include its post-independence period between

1947-51, Indira Gandhi's period of "Emergency" rule from 1975-77, and the post-2017 period under Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) rule (Jaffrelot & Anil 2021, Hansen & Roy 2022).

India's ethnofederation was imposed (a) from the skeleton of British colonial rule and (b) in the face of resistance to centralized rule by ethno-linguistic minorities (Brancati 2010, Adeney & Swenden 2019). It has become a highly centralized federation since its inception. And Hindi-speakers –those from neither "Scheduled Tribes" nor "Scheduled Castes"– have exercised exclusionary rule over India's vast and diverse territory (Chandra 2016).

India experienced three democratization episodes, in 1951, 1952, and 1977. The first two of these do not seem to have been preceded by serious crises: 1951 and 1952 represent the implementation of India's liberal constitution and the holding of founding elections, respectively. These episodes seemingly stemmed from the attempt to legitimate India's founding government. The 1977 democratization episode represents the end of Indira's Emergency. This was preceded by mass protests against Emergency rule, which ostensibly motivated democratic concessions.

In 1975, Indira Gandhi's Emergency Rule began. However, this was a transition from democratic to autocratic ethnofederalism, and strictly speaking cannot count as a case. Still, 1975 was largely undertaken in response to challenging protests by student groups as well as (attempted) assassinations of public figures. This seems to exemplify my theoretical sequence quite well.

The BJP obtained a parliamentary majority in India's 2014 elections and autocratized in 2017. These changes have been most evident in declining rights for religious minorities like Muslims. As in 1975, however, this was a transition from democratic to autocratic ethnofederalism. I do not count 2017 as a case.

India further autocratized in 2019. This followed destabilizing and widespread mass protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act, a bill with ostensibly anti-Muslim content. The state's response to protesters furthered backsliding, as protesters were met with police repression, mass arrests, arbitrary imprisonment, and internet shutdowns. The federal government and multiple state governments banned public gatherings of more than four people. This case would

seem to support my theoretical sequence.

Indonesia[†]: Centralization and Exclusion

Indonesia's short-lived federation was created to safeguard Dutch interests in Southeast Asia. It was opposed by a large swath of Indonesia's population who associated federalism with colonial "divide and rule," as well as by Javanese elites who saw it as undermining Indonesian unity. The Javanese elite centralized power in and excluded non-Javanese from the national government (Guomenos 2008). They quickly called for the federation's abrogation, which occurred merely eight months after its creation. As in Cameroon, Indonesia did not undergo regime change during its autocratic ethnofederal history. However, its centralized, exclusive nature may help us understand why the transition to unitarism was so seamless.

Malaysia: Centralization and Exclusion

Malaysian national incumbents constructed a centralized and exclusive federation after Singapore's expulsion in 1965, before which time Singapore enjoyed some political, fiscal, and administrative autonomy (Allison-Reumann & He 2021). No regime changes took place during this two-year period.

Malaysia's longstanding ruling coalition, Barisan Nasional, worked to undermine sub-national autonomy (Bhattacharyya 2020). Despite affording Sabah and Sarawak distinct autonomies, these have been eroded through periods of Emergency Rule, constitutional change, and co-optation of indigenous elites (Ostwald 2017). Today, Malaysia's Prime Minister Department coordinates everything from economic development (including oil, gas, and land) to election administration (Case 2007).

Malays or *Bumiputeras* have served as senior partners in BN while relying on Chinese and Indian junior partners. However, the latter two have almost always been supportive of Malay-led directives (Ostwald 2017). The formal inclusion of Chinese and Indian elites has thus done little to undermine *Bumiputera* control.

Malaysia's 1969 and 1970 autocratization seem to exemplify my theoretical sequence. These were ostensibly a response by national incumbents to serious crises. The 1969 elections resulted in significant gains for non-Malay (especially Chinese) parties, which, in addition to provocative Chinese celebrations, led to Malay-Chinese riots. The national government responded to this crisis by declaring a State of Emergency, suspending parliament, and curbing sub-national autonomy (Ostwald 2017, Hooghe et al. 2016). The 1972 and 1974 democratizations represent the gradual and then complete lifting of the State of Emergency, respectively. These do not seem to have followed serious crises and instead reflected incumbents' difficulties in indefinitely deploying Emergency rule.

In 2018, the opposition Pakatan Harapan defeated BN, which had ruled for over six decades (Ostwald & Oliver 2020). The new Pakatan leadership implemented democratizing reforms thereafter. The reforms included placing the electoral commission under parliamentary control, reducing the Prime Minister's control over finance, and lowering the voting age to 18, which increased the electorate by 7 million people. Malaysia had experienced various crises (e.g., the "1MDB corruption scandal") in the lead-up to 2018, but these were faced by the BN, not Pakatan Harapan. This case is thus excluded from my analysis

Malaysia experienced a regression episode just one year later (Tapsell 2020). Regression involved a slow-down in the reform process as well as the renewed use of draconian laws against political opponents, e.g., those concerning sedition and alleged involvement with foreign armed groups (Weiss 2022). The regression may have been motivated by infighting within Pakatan Harapan and an electoral victory by the opposition BN in Johore state (Tapsell 2020). However, it is not clear that these constituted crises to which autocratization was a response.

Nigeria: Centralization and Exclusion

Decades of military rule served to centralize power away from Nigeria's regions (Suberu 2009). One key mechanism involved devolution to local governments, which bypassed sub-national governments (Dickovick 2014). Political and economic instability regularly led to

re-centralization. For example, after Nigeria's civil war ended in 1970, General Yakubu Gowon implemented a large, nationally-led reconstruction effort (Kendhammer 2014). During Nigeria's structural adjustment period beginning in 1986, General Ibrahim Babangida created large national employment and agricultural agencies that undermined sub-national economic autonomy (Osaghae 2018).

Assessing Nigeria's ethnic exclusion during the 20th century requires assessing the military elite. The 1966-83 period was overseen by southern Igbo "senior partners" (mainly General Olusegun Obasanjo) and two northern Hausa-Fulani "junior partners" (Hashim et al. 2017). After 1984, power was held by different Hausa-Fulani leaders such as Muhammadu Buhari and Babangida. In 1993, Nigeria's military annulled the victory of a southwestern Yoruba (Moshood Abiola). The ensuing controversy led Babangida to step down (Osaghae 2018). His replacement (Sani Abacha) co-opted token southerners as a way of preserving inter-ethnic stability, but without altering de facto northern domination.

Nigeria's 1983 and 1984 autocratizations –which ended the Second Republic– occurred in the face of destabilizing legislative gridlock and post-election violence (Fashagba 2018). Military elites responded to this crisis with a coup and authoritarian repression.

By contrast, Nigeria's three democratization episodes (1979, 1980, 1999) do not seem to exemplify the theoretical sequence. In 1979, the Nigerian military transferred power to civilian rulers. Civilian rule deepened in 1980. Military elites ostensibly saw the "Second Republic" as a safe choice. This is partly because they had created a constitutional drafting committee that subsequently weakened sub-national governments in the Second Republic (Fashagba 2018). This suggests a useful refinement of my theory: national incumbents in centralized, exclusive AEFs may have reason to democratize so long as they can maintain national dominance. Regardless, the 1979 and 1980 democratizations do not seem to have been preceded by serious crises. Similarly, and much as in BiH, international pressure seems to best account for Nigeria's 1999 democratization.

Pakistan: Centralization and Exclusion

Much as in Nigeria, military rule led to centralization in Pakistan's AEF (Nelson 2022). After his 1958 coup, Ayub Khan introduced a new constitution in hopes of minimizing sub-national autonomy, which he found "unsuitable" for Pakistanis (Adeney 2007, 115). And Musharraf, after his bloodless coup in 1999, acted on "the need...to '[s]trengthen federation, remove inter provincial disharmony and restore national cohesion" (Adeney 2007, 116). Bhattacharyya (2020, 170) observes "the near absence of the autonomy of the federal units [that] have characterized the so-called federal system - so much so that many provinces have resorted to insurgency."

Pakistani national governments have also been ethnically exclusive. Between 1958-71, Mohajirs played a noticeable but subservient role alongside Punjabis (Adeney 2009). After 1971, however, Punjabis began to accumulate more power. The Punjabi-controlled center has made concessions to smaller ethnic groups over time, such as economic decentralization to the Baluchistan province through increased development funds (Adeney 2009). Similarly, during Zia's rule (1977-88), ethnic Baluchi leaders were co-opted in larger numbers (Siddiqi 2012). Still, these developments have not offset the trajectory of Punjabi dominance since 1971 (Ayres 2009).

Pakistan held elections in 1977, which liberalized the polity. These were scheduled elections, not responses to a serious crisis. However, the elections were followed by a serious crisis after the opposition alleged vote rigging, culminating in widespread violence across the country. In response to these crises, General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq launched a coup and reverted Pakistan back to closed autocracy (Nelson 2022). Zia held party-less elections in 1984, partially liberalizing Pakistan. These elections seem to have been a response to mass protests by the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy. Finally, after Zia's death in 1989, Pakistan further liberalized as the military permitted elections, empowering Benazir Bhutto. But much like in Nigeria, this seemed to represent a prudent transfer of power by military elites, not a

response to serious crises.

In 1999, Pakistani national incumbents were challenged by civil-military strife, stemming from Nawaz Sharif's overreach in military affairs. In response to this crisis, General Musharraf launched a coup and reverted Pakistan back to closed autocracy. In 2002, Pakistan once again held party-less elections –relatively free but unfair– under Musharraf (Karatnycky et al. 2003). However, these were scheduled elections, not ostensibly responses to crises. Finally, Pakistan's 2008 liberalization followed Musharraf's resignation, which followed a serious crisis stemming from his unsuccessful attempt to dismiss a supreme court justice.

Russia: Decentralization and Exclusion (1991-3), Centralization and Exclusion (1993-)

Russia inherited extremely decentralized federal institutions after the Soviet Union's collapse. In this environment, individual Russian Republics strengthened themselves at the center's expense (Burgess 2009). Boris Yeltsin was forced to accept this decentralized state of affairs in order to preserve Russia's territorial integrity (Hughes 2017). However, Russian national incumbents began re-centralizing power after 1992. This process accelerated after the 1998 economic crisis (Gel'man 2009). Centralization has continued during the 21st century under Vladimir Putin, who replaced elected sub-national governors with appointed sub-national parliaments (Ross 2008, Hughes 2017).

Despite inheriting a decentralized polity, Russia is much more homogeneous –and thus ethnically exclusive– than the U.S.S.R. This has enabled Russian dominance in Moscow. Russian elites have had less of a need to co-opt non-Russians in order to stabilize the federation, opting instead to make asymmetrical bargains with sub-national minority elites (Grigoryan 2012).

Russia's 1992 democratization, which occurred under decentralized and exclusive conditions, constitutes one of two "off-diagonal" cases for my theory. I do not have strong predictions for these cases. But given that (a) decentralization was extremely salient for Russian politics and (b) exclusion was more of an incidental phenomenon, it makes sense that Russia democratized. It is not clear that Russia faced a challenge at this time, although economic shocks relating to

liberalization were salient. In 1993, Boris Yeltsin dissolved parliament. Russia became more centralized and ethnically exclusive thereafter (Ross 2008). The 1993 and 2000 autocratizations would thus seem to confirm my theory, as national incumbents were challenged by constitutional crises and the Chechen War, respectively.

Serbia-Montenegro: Decentralization and Exclusion

Serbia-Montenegro's constitution afforded the two republics "more powers than they had in [Yugoslavia's already decentralized] 1974 constitution," including conducting their own foreign policy (Malesevic 2000). This decentralized state of affairs set the stage for Montenegro to elect a pro-secession president and adopt a currency different from Serbia's (Anderson 2012). Serbia-Montenegro became an exclusive polity, owing to Serbs' position as "senior partners" in the executive and Montenegrins' position as junior partners (Anderson 2012). Perceptions of Serbian domination ultimately led to Montenegro's secession.

Like the Russian case discussed above, I do not have strong predictions for these "off-diagonal" cases. Serbia-Montenegro democratized in 2000, holding free and fair elections that led to Milosevic's defeat. Much like in Russia's case, decentralization seems to have "overpowered" exclusion. Democratization ostensibly came in response to the "Bulldozer Revolution" crisis against Milosevic's rule.

Soviet Union: Centralization and Exclusion

The Soviet Union became a highly centralized polity after its inception. The centralist Communist Party of the Soviet Union was itself enshrined in the constitution as "Soviet society's guiding force" (Brown 2004). Brief experiments with decentralization (e.g., Khruschev's economic reforms) did not fundamentally alter the Soviet Union's centralization, mostly leading to re-centralization (Lapidus 2004). This created a "'fundamental dualism': [Bolsheviks'] commitment to an essentially unitary state clothed in the trappings of federalism" (Lapidus 2004, 124).

Russians progressively cemented their control over the USSR, which reached its apex during Stalin's Russification campaign and began to decline during Gorbachev's tenure. Because the USSR was such a large, multi-ethnic empire, the Politburo and CPSU were compelled to co-opt non-Russians as junior partners. So despite its broadly exclusive character, the Soviet Union was still more inclusive than its Russian successor state.

I noted above that it is more instructive to think of the USSR's decentralization and inclusion after 1985 in terms of trends as opposed to levels. This dates to Gorbachev's 1985 *perestroika* reforms, which sought to empower the sub-national republics at the expense of his rivals in Moscow. This culminated with the 1991 decentralist "New Union Treaty," which then prompted an attempted coup by elites in Moscow with re-centralizing ambitions (Bunce 1999b).

The U.S.S.R. liberalized in 1990, which followed the aforementioned period of sub-national strengthening and ethnic inclusion. This case would seem to confirm my theoretical sequence, given that national incumbents were responding to destabilizing protests throughout the USSR.

Tanzania: Centralization and Exclusion

Tanzania's national government was extremely centralized vis-a-vis its two autonomous islands, Zanzibar and Pemba (Ghai 2013). Some observers have characterized Tanzania as a federacy for this reason (Anderson 2012). Mainlanders –Tanzania's dominant "ethnic" group– consistently controlled the national government and excluded islanders (Hyden 1999).

Tanzania's authoritarian regression in 1965 does not seem to have been prompted by any specific crisis, as opposed to efforts by president Julius Nyerere to consolidate his control over the economy and polity. Its democratization episodes in 1992 and 1995 also do not appear to have been motivated by crises but rather by international pressure to hold elections (Hyden 1999).

Yugoslavia: Centralization and Exclusion (1945-74), Decentralization and Inclusion (1975-92)

Yugoslavia's federation became highly centralized after its inception (Hoare 2012). This is partly because there was limited support for communism in the republics. Josip Tito projected Communist party control from Belgrade with Soviet assistance (Malesevic 2005). However, Yugoslavia's 1974 constitution dramatically altered its trajectory. The new constitution was extremely decentralized, almost a confederal document. Sub-national Republics were afforded their own defense forces and banking systems. The requirements for constitutional change were also high, empowering the Republics to veto central proposals (Hughes 2017). Decentralization increased even more after Tito's death, this despite attempts by Serbs to reassert control and re-centralize the federation in the 1990s (Smith 1999, Bunce 1999b).

Serbs were the senior partner in Yugoslavia's central government and national ruling party until 1966, creating an exclusive system. After 1966, Tito's extensive purges of Serb leaders put other republics on a more equal footing, creating a more inclusive national ruling party (Bunce 1999).

Yugoslavia's decentralized, inclusive status at the time of its 1990 democratization seems to confirm the theory and offer support for the theoretical sequence. Indeed, national incumbents ostensibly made democratic concessions in response to multiple crises, including factionalism between the different Republics, ethnic violence, and mass protests throughout the federation (Malesevic 2005).

2.7 Appendix B: Borderline Autocratic Ethnofederations and Regime Changes

The following countries and cases are more difficult to characterize as genuine autocratic ethnofederations or regime changes. For some, the AEFs in question (a) were in fact territorial federations or federacies or (b) did not undergo democratic and autocratic changes as the V-Dem data set indicates.

1. Burma's AEF (1948-1962): The Burmese unit in Burma's AEF was extremely powerful, leading some observers to call Burma a federacy (Hale 2004). For Smith (2007, 195), "the government of Burma, the major segment of the system, was simultaneously the government of the 'Union'. It was a Burma-plus-satellites system rather than a classic federal system." However, Burma's AEF was a constitutional federation and one where Burmans occasionally shared power with or co-opted non-Burmans. Burma is thus included in my analysis.

2. Czechoslovakia's 1976 Democratization and 1987 Autocratization: According to V-Dem, Czechoslovakia's closed autocracy underwent a liberalization episode in 1976 and a regression episode in 1987. These two episodes coincided with Czechoslovakia's sham elections. However, these elections did not ostensibly differ from one another or from other elections under Czechoslovakian communist rule (Cox & Frankland 1995). As such, both episodes are excluded from my analysis.

3. Ethiopia's AEF (1952-1962): For some scholars, Ethiopia's first AEF functioned as a federacy, or rather a unitary country with Eritrea as its one federal unit (Zewde 2002). However, much international energy went into federating the two countries, and Eritrea did enjoy control over concrete jurisdictions such as policing and education. Ethiopia's first AEF is thus included in the universe of AEFs.

4. Ethiopia's 1956 Democratization: According to V-Dem, Ethiopia's closed autocracy underwent a liberalization episode, seemingly after Emperor Haile Selassie introduced a new constitution in 1955 that strengthened parliament. In practice, however, the new constitution was "a legal charter for the consolidation of absolutism." Article 4 stated that "By virtue of His Imperial Blood, as well as by the anointing he has received, the person of the Emperor is sacred...and His power indisputable" (Zewde 2002, 206). This was arguably not a liberalization episode and is excluded from my analysis

5. India's 2019 Autocratization: Beginning in 2017, V-Dem began characterizing India as an

electoral autocracy instead of an electoral democracy. Some scholars dispute this coding choice (Verma 2023). It seems clear that India has autocratized under BJP rule, but perhaps not so much as to lose its democratic status. In other words, Indian backsliding has arguably been quantitative as opposed to qualitative. I tend to agree with these analyses. However, this distinction is not of central importance for my analysis, which is why I include India.

6. Indonesia's AEF (1949-1950): In Indonesia's short-lived federation, the "boundaries of the federal states and autonomous units rarely corresponded to distinct ethnic or cultural groups...Despite its multiethnic character, [it] was essentially a territorial federation" (Guomenos 2008, 36). However, the units did correspond to at least some ethnic groups, including Madura, East Java, and Great Dayak. Hence, it is included in my analysis

7. Malaysia's AEF (1965-): After the Chinese Singapore province was expelled, some believe that Malaysia lost its ethnofederal status and became a territorial federation. However, Malaysia's second AEF retained the Sabah and Sarawak states, ethnic homelands with high concentrations of indigenous Kadazan-Dusun and Dayaks, respectively. Some argue that these groups are "not sufficiently concentrated geographically to make an ethnically defined federation a viable proposition" (Anderson 2012, 7). Others argue that these are ethnofederal units within an otherwise territorial federation (Case 2007). Part of the difficulty lies in determining whether Sabah and Sarawak's indigenous communities are sufficiently different from those in Peninsular Malaysia to constitute minorities. I include Malaysia's second AEF in my analysis.

8. Nigeria's 2012's Democratization: V-Dem does not consider Nigeria's Fourth Republic (1999) the beginning of an electoral democracy but instead codes this as occurring in 2012. The 1999 elections were certainly marked by irregularities,[15] but so too were the 2011 elections that preceded Nigeria's alleged democratization. Ultimately, both 1999 and 2011 were similar

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[15]These included "Abuses of the electoral process – including ballot stuffing, inflation of results, and voter intimidation – [which] were widespread enough to question the elections' outcome in certain electoral districts" (Carter Center 1999, 11).

in the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) dominance, which flowed from "the power of incumbency and related capacity to manipulate elections, [distribute] patronage, and intimidat[e]...opposition and electorate" (Agbaje et al. 2018, 352). I exclude the 2012 case from my analysis.

9. Tanzania's AEF (1964-1995): The Zanzibar and Pemba islands both have constitutionally recognized autonomy, but some argue that Tanzania was ruled more like a federacy before its democratization. As with the Ethiopia 1952-62 case discussed above, this was an extremely centralized AEF but a constitution AEF nonetheless. It is included in my analysis.

Chapter 3

Ethiopia's 2005 Autocratization

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the first of three case studies of regime change in Ethiopia's autocratic ethnofederation (AEF). AEFs are polities where leaders are neither freely nor fairly elected and ethnic groups are afforded federal autonomy. All three case studies take a narrative form, providing a chronology of key events and decisions that can help enrich and refine the theory (Waldner 2015). Although chapter 2 offered preliminary support for the general theory, more in-depth analysis is needed to connect each component of the theoretical sequence.

I explain Ethiopia's 2005 autocratization using the chapter 2 theory, which posits that different combinations of centralization and ethnic exclusion affect how national incumbents respond to crises. In AEFs that are centralized and exclusive, national incumbents are strong (vis-a-vis sub-national governments) and ethnically unified enough to respond with authoritarian repression. By contrast, in AEFs that are decentralized and inclusive, national incumbents are too weak and ethnically fractured to respond with repression. As the crisis drags on without a resolution, incumbents may need to make democratic concessions.

This chapter provides evidence for each component of the chapter 2 theoretical sequence, tracing the processes by which (a) Ethiopia's AEF became and remained centralized and exclusive and (b) national incumbents responded to a serious crisis with repression. The central story of this chapter is that (a) enabled (b), affecting national incumbents' opportunities to autocratize in

2005. My argument is diagrammed in Figure 3.1.

Institutional Structure	**Centralization:** 1994 constitution & national ruling coalition strengthen national incumbents. **Exclusion:** Tigrayan control renders national incumbents free from ethnic gridlock.
⬇	⬇
Response to 2005 election crisis (opposition electoral success, post-election protests)	**Autocratization, 2005:** National government represses electoral opponents and protesters, with little reliance on sub-national or non-Tigrayan elites.

Figure 3.1. Ethiopia's 2005 Autocratization Sequence. Centralization and ethnic exclusion enabled national incumbents to respond to crises by autocratizing.

This chapter proceeds as follows. To set the stage for all three case studies, section 3.2 provides background information on how Ethiopia's AEF was implemented after non-federal systems failed to mitigate ethnic violence. During Ethiopia's Transitional Government and founding elections, the dominant player –Ethiopia's national ruling coalition– marginalized and arrested its opponents, thus entrenching autocracy. Appendix D characterizes Ethiopia's AEF in terms of ethnofederal theory, discussing how it has both mitigated and exacerbated ethnic conflict.

In section 3.3, I discuss Ethiopia's centralization and ethnic exclusion after 1991. These processes ultimately enabled autocratization. Centralization was facilitated by a constitution that empowered the national government and a multi-party national ruling coalition that controlled sub-national governments. Exclusion was facilitated by the power of ethnic Tigrayans in the national government, ruling coalition, and security sector. I also discuss a key event in Ethiopia's centralized, exclusive trajectory, the 1998-2000 Eritrea War. This event was significant because incumbents in Tigray's sub-national government fomented war with Eritrea. After the war, these incumbents were purged, which decreased Tigray's autonomy (centralization) and concentrated

Table 3.1. Key Political Groups in Ethnofederal Ethiopia, 1991-2005.

Actor	Significance for 2005 Autocratization
Tigrayan incumbents	Created AEF, oversaw centralization and exclusion, oversaw repressive response to election crisis
Amhara and Oromo incumbents	Given careers under AEF, their de jure inclusion furthered de facto exclusion, challenged by more "genuine" ethnic representatives in 2005 election
Amhara and Oromo opposition	Excluded under AEF, challenged incumbents in 2005 election, victims of incumbents' repressive response

power in the hands of a single ethnic Tigrayan, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi (exclusion). My evidence for this section comes from secondary literature and data on the ethnic composition of Ethiopia's cabinet.

In section 3.4 I discuss Ethiopia's 2005 elections and post-election unrest. This crisis motivated autocratization. Opposition coalitions performed surprisingly well in the elections, which demanded a response from national incumbents. That incumbents deployed authoritarian repression in response was enabled by the centralization and exclusion discussed above. My evidence for this section comes from election data, political party manifestos, and the secondary literature. Appendix E analyzes Ethiopian sub-national politics to clarify the sources of opposition grievances in 2005.

Finally, in section 3.5, I discuss the national government's autocratizing response in 2005, which included imprisoning and repressing dissidents. The crisis was resolved rather quickly; this had much to do with incumbents' power to act sans sub-national cooperation, as well as their decisive control by ethnic Tigrayans. My evidence for this section comes from original interview data, disaggregated democracy data, and secondary literature.

Table 3.1 displays three actors who were crucial to generating Ethiopia's 2005 autocratization. Figure 3.2 displays the time period under consideration.

As a final point, although this chapter distinguishes the national government from the national ruling coalition, it is hard not to discuss them in tandem. Indeed, this fusion was one of

1988 ······●	TPLF creates EPRDF coalition.
1991 ······●	TPLF-EPRDF overthrows the *Derg*.
1992-5 ······●	Ethnofederalism implemented, becomes authoritarian: election irregularities, boycotts, imprisonment.
1998-2000 ······●	Key Centralizing, Exclusionary Event: Eritrea War, fomented by sub-national Tigray government.
2001 ······●	National government's rivals purged.
05/2005 ······●	**Crisis**: semi-competitive elections & post-election violence, motivating **Autocratization**.
06/2005-11/2005 ······●	Autocratization continues: state repression, opposition imprisonment.

Figure 3.2. Ethiopia's Autocratization Timeline, 1991-2005

the most salient facts of Ethiopian politics (Fisseha 2012, Lyons 2019). Observers have noted the importance of "party-state complexes" in understanding autocracies, especially those –like Ethiopia– led by revolutionaries (Levitsky & Way 2022).

3.2   Background on Ethiopian Ethnofederalism

This section provides background information on the implementation of ethnofederalism in Ethiopia as well as the process by which it became unmistakably autocratic. This latter process is not itself a regime change case to be explained. Instead, it is part of the background that helps us understand Ethiopia's centralization and exclusion, 2005 election crisis, and the ensuing autocratization.

Adopting Ethnofederalism in Ethiopia

Recall from chapter 2 that ethnofederalism is commonly imposed by colonial powers or adopted by autocrats given the failure of previous (non-federal) arrangements to mitigate

ethnic conflict. Ethiopia's first autocratic ethnofederation with Eritrea (1952-62) exemplified the colonial path while its contemporary AEF exemplifies the "failed alternatives" path.

Briefly, Ethiopia's AEF with Eritrea was imposed by the United Kingdom and international community in 1952 after Eritrea's decolonization. AEF was a compromise between Eritrea's annexation by Ethiopia and Eritrean independence.[1] However, Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie (who ruled from 1930-74) ultimately abrogated the federation in 1962. Selassie's unitary, exclusive regime privileged the Amharic language and Orthodox Christianity, which aggrieved Eritreans and led to a decades-long armed struggle (Clapham 1975).

Centralized governance continued after Selassie was overthrown by the Soviet-inspired *Derg* military dictatorship, which ruled from 1974-91. The *Derg* repressed and fought against multiple ethnic liberation fronts that sought greater autonomy.[2] Key among these was the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) (Young 1997). Nearly two decades of warfare weakened the *Derg* while strengthening TPLF, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front, and other armed groups.

With Eritrea set to secede from Ethiopia, TPLF prepared to assume state power as *Derg* leadership fled or surrendered in 1991. Importantly, TPLF knew that it could not rule Ethiopia while representing ethnic Tigrayans, a mere 6% of the population (Aalen 2020). Thus, TPLF created or supported liberation fronts in present day Amhara, Oromia, and the southern regions. All four fronts coalesced into the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF).

Stressing the failure of unitary, exclusionary regimes, TPLF argued that Ethiopia needed a decentralized ethnofederation and inclusive ruling coalition (Smith 2013). This would appease historically marginalized groups (e.g., the Oromo and Somali) that were threatening independence and would not settle for less. Consistent with the "failed alternatives" path discussed in chapter 2, "any other alternative [to ethnofederalism] would have spelt the dissolution of Ethiopia into its ethnic components" (Pausewang 2009, 71; Anderson 2012). (By contrast, and similar to other

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[1]Many Eritrean Christian elites preferred annexation because of their opportunities to benefit under Haile Selassie's Christian government. By contrast, many Eritrean Muslim elites, who feared exclusion under the Selassie government, sought independence (Iyob 1997).

[2]The *Derg* promised but did not deliver a federal system (Wubeneh 2017).

historically dominant groups discussed in chapter 2 (e.g., Javanese in Indonesia, Russians in the USSR, Francophones in Cameroon), many ethnic Amhara elites disapproved of ethnofederalism, which was seen as undermining national unity (Pausewang 2009).) In addition to appeasing Oromos and Somalis, ethnofederalism could also guarantee TPLF permanent state power. Indeed, if TPLF –representing such a small part of the country– could no longer control EPRDF, then at least it could control the Tigray sub-national government (Young 1997).

EPRDF inherited an historically centralized and exclusive state. However, the civil war against the *Derg* had seriously compromised the national government's capacity for centralized control. In addition, although EPRDF was created by Tigrayans, the latter were forced to include Amharas, Oromos, and southerners in 1991, in order to deepen EPRDF's control. As this chapter shows, Ethiopia became much more centralized and exclusive thereafter.

From Ethnofederalism to Autocratic Ethnofederalism

Here I provide background information on how EPRDF reproduced Ethiopian autocracy during its first four years in power (1991-95). Briefly, the Transitional Government of Ethiopia was deceptively pluralistic. Opposition groups complained about such deception, to which EPRDF responded by repressing its opponents and ensuring that subsequent elections were neither free nor fair.

Under EPRDF, Ethiopia transitioned from "closed" to "electoral" autocracy (Coppedge et al. 2023). Elections under the *Derg* resembled the kind of window-dressing one observed in other closed, communist polities: only the ruling party could be selected (and never removed). However, I do not analyze this transition (from closed → electoral autocracy) because it occurred simultaneous with the introduction of ethnofederalism. We can thus think of ethnofederal Ethiopia as having been born an electoral autocracy (rather than having transitioned to one).

TPLF was a Marxist-Leninist group that disdained western liberal democracy, which it saw as bourgeois and inappropriate for the global south (Bach 2011). However, TPLF-EPRDF had the misfortune of coming to power in 1991 as the Soviet Union collapsed. Responding

to the emerging unipolar order, TPLF leaders began promising democracy and free markets (Weis 2016). They appeared to make good on their promise while forming the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (1991-94). Of the 89 transitional government seats, EPRDF held only 32, the opposition Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) held 12, and 27 other parties or independent candidates held the remaining 45 seats (Fisseha 2019). OLF's participation was significant because of its historic disagreements with EPRDF.[3] EPRDF thus seemed to be democratizing.

It soon became evident that the Transitional Government was an instrument for EPRDF's authoritarian control. First, the non-EPRDF/OLF parties were mostly created by EPRDF, which co-opted ethnic elites who lacked genuine linkages to their constituents. Some such constituents had never even demanded self-determination or heard of TPLF's armed struggle (Vaughan 2011). Second, the Transitional Government excluded key Ethiopian interests, particularly those led by ethnic Amhara and multi-ethnic urban elites (Gebregziabher 2019). These elites were hostile to ethnofederalism specifically and ethnic politics more generally, which were seen as threats to a unified Ethiopian nation. Such Ethiopian "nationalists" justified Haile Selassie and the *Derg*'s one language (Amharic), one religion (Orthodox Christianity) policies as a normal part of nation-building that ought to be resumed (Aalen 2002). EPRDF castigated the nationalists as covert Amhara chauvinists, alleging that nationalist parties were comprised of former *Derg* officials unwilling to renounce violence (Berhanu 2003).[4] The only nationalist party to play a minor role, the All Amhara People's Organization (AAPO), was eventually expelled from the transitional government. AAPO's expulsion aggrieved ethnic Amharas.[5]

The EPRDF-dominated Transitional Government proposed an ethnofederal constitution. The constitution included sub-national autonomy and many liberal rights (Berhanu 2003).[6] Ethno-

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[3]EPRDF and OLF had tactically supported one another against the *Derg* but disagreed on the appropriateness of an independent Oromia (Young 1997).

[4]Compare to the USSR, where Lenin viewed Russian elites as chauvinistic and insensitive to the plight of non-Russians (Smith 1999).

[5]The resurgence of Amhara *ethno*-nationalism, which played a key role in Ethiopia's 2018 liberalization and 2019 autocratization, can arguably be traced to this moment (Tazebew 2021).

[6]The 1995 constitution created 9 sub-national governments, 65 zonal governments, 750 district governments, and 10,000 local governments. The Afar, Amhara, Oromia, Somali, and Tigray regions were named for ethnic homelands and each contained a titular group. Although EPRDF detested the *Derg* regime, it relied almost exclusively on data

nationalists mostly supported ethnofederalism as a solution to their historic marginalization. Nationalists mostly opposed it as a recipe for disintegration.

Before ratifying the constitution, elections were held in 1992 to fill new sub-national and local governments. The opposition OLF and AAPO called for election postponements to allow for additional preparation, which EPRDF rejected, leading to boycotts. OLF then unsuccessfully resumed its armed struggle in Oromia, with many OLF leaders dying or fleeing to Eritrea.[7] With two of its most viable competitors weakened, EPRDF handily won the elections, entrenching its national and sub-national power.

After the 1992 elections, concerned opposition parties convened in Paris in 1993. In response, EPRDF removed the two "Paris convention" participants that were currently part of the Transitional Government, accusing them of conspiring to undermine the transition (Berhanu 2003). The opposition called another convention in Addis Ababa in 1994, after which EPRDF harassed or jailed attendees.

In 1994, Ethiopia held elections to a constitutional assembly that would dissolve the Transitional Government. EPRDF won these elections and intimidated its few remaining opponents. It became clear by this point that the transitional government's function was primarily to appease the international community (Weis 2016).

Ethiopia constitution was ratified in 1995 and featured many liberal components. And indeed, the free press grew considerably, from zero legal opposition newspapers under the *Derg* to nearly 100 in 1995 (Weis 2016). However, journalists critical of EPRDF were soon jailed and newspaper offices shut down (Stremlau 2011). Courts charged with upholding liberal rights were ultimately run by EPRDF judges (Berhanu 2003).[8] Protests and expressions of dissent were

collected by the *Derg* in demarcating regions (Fisseha 2018). Apart from these five relatively homogeneous regions, three multi-ethnic regions were created: the Southern Nations Nationalities People's Region, Benishangul-Gumuz, and Gambella.

[7]OLF's grievances against EPRDF were that (a) EPRDF had not yet incorporated OLF fighters into the national military, and (b) EPRDF's Oromo party, the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO) had no right to represent Oromos.

[8]EPRDF's unwillingness to respect individual rights was unsurprising given its history: TPLF saw individual rights as appropriate for 19th century, ethnically homogeneous western societies whose democratic institutions co-evolved with capitalism (Young 2021). By contrast, Ethiopia's lack of capitalist development and ethnic

Table 3.2. Ethiopian Election Results, 1991-Present. Election data from Tronvoll (2011), Lyons (2019), and Lyons and Verjee (2022). Data seemingly unavailable for local 1996 and 1998 elections.

Year	Incumbent Seat %	Opposition Seat %
1992 (Local/Regional)	97	3
1994 (Constitutional Assembly)	91	9
1995 (National)	99	1
2000 (National)	98	2
2001 (Local/Regional)	99	1
2005 (National)	68	31[a]
2008 (Local)	99	1
2010 (National)	99	1
2015 (National)	100	0
2021 (National)	97	3

[a]The opposition was later expelled.

heavily restricted (Stremlau 2011, Emmenegger et al. 2011). Quasi-democratic institutions (e.g., the legislature and judiciary) served mostly as rubber stamps for the autocratic ruling coalition (Fisseha 2012).

Ethiopia has remained an "electoral autocracy" ever since EPRDF came to power, as the election results in Table 3.2 make clear. This dissertation explains democratizing and autocratizing changes in Ethiopia *within* the electoral autocracy category. Opposition parties and candidates knew that if they did not join EPRDF, the latter would rig election results or use the security forces to repress them and their supporters (Vaughan & Tronvoll 2003). Opponents regularly boycotted elections or simply participated because the constitution mandated their dissolution after several years of inactivity. Those opposition parties that managed to win one or a few sub-national seats regularly had their offices shut down by EPRDF loyalists or destroyed by EPRDF-affiliated gangs (Berhanu 2003). Ethiopian citizens rarely supported opposition parties for fear of losing state benefits (e.g., employment, fertilizer). And indeed, EPRDF politicians and cadres regularly threatened them as such (Lefort 2007, Abebe 2016, Mezgebe 2015). Prime Minister Meles Zenawi himself argued that only after Ethiopia had achieved middle-income

heterogeneity rendered collective rights more appropriate. At the same time, however, EPRDF also failed to respect collective rights, e.g., to secession.

Table 3.3. Centralization and Exclusion in Ethiopia, 1991-2005.

Sources of Centralization	Sources of Exclusion
National government's constitutional control over economy and security	Tigrayan elites' control over national ruling coalition and security sector
Sub-national governments' "mere" symbolic and administrative control	Tigrayan elites' economic power, Amhara and Oromo elites' economic dependence
Centralized decision-making and monitoring through national ruling coalition	Tigrayan elites' strong ties to constituents, Amhara and Oromo elites' weak ties

status could EPRDF permit opposition parties (de Waal 2018).

3.3   Centralization and Ethnic Exclusion

This section shows that Ethiopia became centralized and ethnically exclusive after 1991. Consistent with the chapter 2 theory, centralization and exclusion enabled national incumbents to respond with authoritarian repression to the 2005 election crisis. After discussing these processes –previewed in Table 3.3– I discuss the 1998-2000 Ethio-Eritrea War, a key event that furthered centralization and exclusion.

3.3.1   Centralization

De Jure Centralization: The Constitution

Ethiopia's constitution strengthened national incumbents vis-a-vis sub-national incumbents. Table 3.4 lists some salient constitutional rights and provisions. It is true that the very creation of sub-national governments marked a radical departure from Ethiopia's unitary past, e.g., under the *Derg)*. However, arguably the most salient powers held by sub-national governments were symbolic, which did not undermine the national government's control.[9] This section relies primarily on secondary literature because longitudinal data on centralization is sparse and geographically incomplete. For example, Hooghe et al.'s (2016) "Regional Authority Index"

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[9]My analysis departs from cross-national analyses that characterize Ethiopia as decentralized, owing simply to the existence of sub-national governments (Reidl & Dickovick (2014)).

Table 3.4. Provisions in Ethiopia's 1994 Constitution

Article(s)	Provision	In practice
5(2)	Amharic is national language	Non-Amhara grievances
14-38	Liberal rights	Undermined by autocracy
39	Right to secession	Secessionists repressed
40(3)	State owns all land	National coalition strengthened
46-47	Ethiopia is ethnofederal	Undermined by centralization
49(5)	Oromia jurisdiction over capital Addis Ababa	Undermined by national government

does not include Ethiopia, while none of Varieties of Democracy's 15 "Subnational" indicators measures centralization between national and sub-national governments.

Table 3.5 lists the constitutional division of powers. The national government was afforded control over economic development, fiscal policy, taxation, and defense, in addition to owning all land (Berhanu 2003).[10] In addition, it could intervene in sub-national affairs whenever constitutional order was allegedly endangered or citizens' human rights allegedly violated. These "vague and overarching...provisions offer[ed the center]...extensive scope for extensive policy leverage –effectively even veto" over the sub-national governments (Vaughan & Tronvoll 2003, 87). Finally, the national government was empowered to adopt the national budget and allocate it to sub-national governments.

By contrast, sub-national governments were tasked with *implementing* national directives, a weak source of constitutional power (Abebe 2016). For example, the national government could "enact laws on the utilization of natural resources," whereas sub-national governments would merely "administer natural resources in accordance with federal laws" (Abebe 2016, 190).[11] Even if leaders unaffiliated with the ruling EPRDF coalition could obtain sub-national office –which was unlikely, as I discuss below– their powers were circumscribed by a centralized

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[10]As a rural, religious country, land is economically and symbolically quite significant in Ethiopia (Levine 1965, Markakis 1968).

[11]After 2010, sub-national governments even began to relinquish their powers "upward" to the national government, e.g., their power to administer land (Fisseha 2012).

Table 3.5. Division of Powers in Ethiopia's 1994 Constitution.

National government (Article 51)	Sub-national governments (Article 52)
Economic, social, & development policy (2)	Reserved powers (1)
Fiscal, monetary, & regional borrowing policy (4, 7)	Establish/execute regional admin and civil service (2a, 2b, 2f)
Natural resource law (5)	Administer resources according to federal law
National defense & federal police, foreign policy (6, 8)	State police (2g)
Taxation (10)	Residual taxation (2e)
Inter-regional commerce (12)	
Administer institutions servicing multiple regions (13)	
Intervene in regions for security reasons (14)	
Election law (15)	
Declare state of emergency (16)	
Matters relating to nationality (17)	

constitution.

Several key sub-national powers were symbolic, especially the power to choose administrative and educational languages. This was a "revolutionary change," from Ethiopia's past: historically marginalized groups replaced the Amharic script with Latin script and renamed cities, claiming that their "time as slaves had passed" (Clapham 2009, 187). However, symbolic decentralization enabled the ruling coalition to extend its control across regions, co-opting local language speakers who would not dare press for substantive decentralization. Some historically marginalized groups thus saw symbolic decentralization as a way of placating them, as opposed to a genuine form of autonomy (Jalata 1998). And although sub-national governments could choose working languages, Amharic remained Ethiopia's national language.[12]

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[12]TPLF-EPRDF thought it too costly to replace Amharic-speaking bureaucrats when it gained power. Federal language policy remains a source of grievance and exclusion, as the government is Ethiopia's largest formal employer (Ayele & De Visser 2017). Midega (2014) found that ethnic Amharas were employed in 50% of all federal jobs despite constituting 27% of the population. Thus, EPRDF partly reproduced the language-based domination that ethnofederalism was said to redress.

In addition, to language choice, sub-national governments could also set ethnic quotas or (re)draft sub-national constitutions (Fisseha 2018). For example, Oromia reserved its presidency and 50% of the legislature for Oromos. And although sub-national constitutions were quite similar –a fact owing to EPRDF's de facto centralized control, as I discuss below– several were permitted to write symbolically contentious preambles (Fessha 2021).[13]

The constitution also afforded Oromia's sub-national government an asymmetrical "special right" to the capital Addis Ababa, located inside Oromia. This was a key provision, as Oromos saw Addis as "stolen" from them by centralizing, Amhara-dominated regimes (Jalata 1998). The special right ostensibly afforded Oromia substantive control over Addis' economy and government. However, EPRDF's control over the national judiciary as well as Oromia's sub-national government meant that the special right was not exercised in practice. This was a lasting source of grievance in Oromia.[14]

Finally, Ethiopia's "nations, nationalities, and people's" were constitutionally empowered to pursue self-determination up to and including secession.[15] Secession was fairly unconditional as stipulated in the constitution, requiring a 2/3 majority in the sub-national legislature and simple majority in a sub-national referendum (Vaughan and Tronvoll 2003). In practice, however, the centralized EPRDF coalition repressed secessionist parties (e.g., the Oromo Liberation Front in Oromia) and filled sub-national governments with loyalists opposed to secession (Vaughan 2011).

De Facto Centralization: The Ruling Coalition

Ethiopia's national ruling coalition furthered de facto centralization by imposing its principles, practices, institutions, and ideology on sub-national governments. Key among these were the decision-making principle of democratic centralism, the practice of cadre evaluation, institutions like Central Committees, Politburos and the developmental state, and the ideology of

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[13]For example, Oromia's constitution did not acknowledge the existence of regional minorities (Fisseha 2018).

[14]As I discuss in chapter 4, accusations that the national government was annexing parts of Oromia into Addis provoked the 2014-18 protests, a serious crisis that prompted liberalization.

[15]TPLF supported this right as a means of keeping Eritrea in the federation, which did not work (Young 1996).

"revolutionary democracy." Unlike the constitution, which changed little during the 1991-2005 period, EPRDF's project of centralized control expanded considerably.

During the 1991-2005 period, sub-national governments became mere administrative arms that implemented national EPRDF directives (Erk 2014, Mezgebe 2015). EPRDF controlled not only the sub-national governments but also the military and police, civil society organizations, mass recruitment organizations, development agencies, and even charities (Lyons 2019). As I discuss below, key decision-making positions in these institutions were held by ethnic Tigrayans, which furthered ethnic exclusion.

The ruling coalitions' centralist structure helped it control sub-national governments. EPRDF operated according to the Leninist principle of "democratic centralism": the Central Committee formulated legislation that was adopted by the national parliament and then by sub-national parliaments. Parliamentarians who challenged EPRDF directives –thus violating democratic centralism– risked losing their jobs or worse (Aalen 2020).[16] Ultimately, the "mismatch between...the constitution [which, as I argued above, was not decentralized to begin with] and the Leninist political praxis of the dominant party" furthered centralization (Habtu 2005, 333).

After sub-national governments adopted EPRDF policies, sub-national leaders and cadres were evaluated through the practice of *gimgema* (Amharic for 'review') (Labzae 2021).[17] *Gimgema* initially seemed to guard against excessive centralization by subjecting national government elites to review. And indeed, many national cadres inherited from the *Derg* found *gimgema* highly threatening to their sense of bureaucratic impunity (Young 1997). Over time,

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[16]This practice was taken from TPLF's revolutionary struggle, where disobeying central directives in the bush was punishable by death (Kefale 2016). It is worth noting that, despite being a tool of national control, democratic centralism helped mitigate important intra-coalition conflicts. For example, before Meles Zenawi consolidated power in 2001, he begrudgingly accepted the Central Committee's decision against privatization of state industries (Milkias 2003).

[17]TPLF adopted *gimgema* during the revolutionary struggle, seeing it as essential for maintaining linkages to the peasantry and assessing its progress. During the struggle, *gimgema* was largely a consensual, democratic practice where leaders were held accountable (Young 1997). It was not particularly threatening, as TPLF leaders –who depended upon peasant production for their survival– had little to lose materially. Egos were bruised if *gimgema* resulted in demotions, but the process ensured that lower-level participants had a sense of horizontal equality within TPLF.

however, *gimgema* was used to control sub-national governments. EPRDF elites in the national government saw *gimgema* as a threat to their rent-seeking (Milkias 2003, Hagmann 2005). EPRDF practices thus furthered centralization.

The EPRDF-led sub-national governments were also expected to adhere to "revolutionary democracy", the centralist state ideology that became hegemonic after 1991. Briefly, EPRDF defined revolutionary democracy in contrast to "bourgeois democracy," which relied on indirect representation by capitalist elites with no incentive to represent peasants (Bach 2011).[18] By contrast, revolutionary democracy relied on direct participation by peasants in "democratic" village associations. Of course, apathetic peasants would need to be compelled to participate, a task that revolutionary democracy vested with the national ruling coalition (Aalen 2020).[19]

Each sub-national government, which was led by an EPRDF coalition party or affiliate, was informally responsible to the EPRDF Central Committee (Milkias 2003). This 60-member committee was composed of 15 members from each of the four EPRDF parties. The Central Committee would elect a 20-member Executive Council (5 members from the four EPRDF parties) that formulated party policy and conducted daily tasks. All four EPRDF parties had their own Central Committees which were responsible to the EPRDF Committee in Addis Ababa. EPRDF's Central Committee dominated Ethiopian politics, although little is known about its concrete workings, where "the old management methods dominated by secrecy and conspiracy [prevailed]" (Aalen 2002, 83) and "a lack of transparency is evident at every level" (Young 1997, 211).

Centralization was also furthered by EPRDF's increasing control over Ethiopian society. EPRDF's membership grew from a few hundred in 1991 to 500,000 in 2005 and 6 million in 2016. This mainly involved co-opting a mass of

> inadequately qualified...administrat[ors who]...do not hold the confidence of the
> local people...[reliant] for their authority and prestige, their positions and their

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[18]Similarly, the Soviets promulgated a "higher" conception of anti-capitalist democracy (Suny 2004).

[19]This paralleled Gramsci's focus on revolutionaries' need for a Machiavellian, "Princely" party to mobilize the proletariat (Fontana 1993).

> salaries, entirely on the party...defend[ing] their own position by making sure
> by any means, even if unscrupulous, that their party stays in power at each
> election...[who] do not hesitate to misuse the police and the prisons. Neither do
> they distinguish between the state, which they claim to represent at the local level,
> the party that supports them, and their own positions of power (Pausewang 2009,
> 71).

The almost total reliance of sub-national and local elites on the national ruling coalition thus served to further the latter's power.

EPRDF's control over Ethiopia's economy also furthered centralization. Recall that the constitution vested all land ownership with the national government. As a consequence, EPRDF controlled Ethiopia's key assets. Prime Minister Meles Zenawi's pursuit of economic development led to the construction of an East Asian-style Developmental State, one that required EPRDF control over sub-national politicians and bureaucrats who would implement economic directives.[20] (Of course, the developmental state model sat awkwardly with EPRDF's ideology of "revolutionary democracy," which stressed peasant participation instead of developmental state technocracy (Bach 2011).) Under the developmental state model, Ethiopia achieved 12 years of double-digit growth. This helped EPRDF's centralist project achieve "performance legitimacy" (Clapham 2018).

Finally, EPRDF's authoritarianism worked hand-in-hand with its centralization. Elections helped EPRDF fill the national and sub-national governments with loyalists as well as identify potential opponents to be repressed (Gandhi & Lust-Okar 2009).

3.3.2   Ethnic Exclusion

Ethnic Tigrayan leaders exercised a high degree of control over Ethiopia's national government and ruling coalition. Much as autocratic ethnofederalism marked a departure from Ethiopia's centralized past, Tigrayan control departed from previous, Amhara-controlled regimes. Tigrayan control traced back to the Tigray People's Liberation Front's control over the Ethiopian

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[20]This was a departure from the East Asian Developmental States, where an independent bureaucracy insulated technocrats from the ruling party's rent-seeking (Haggard 2018). By contrast, Ethiopian PM Meles Zenawi argued that because rent-seeking was inescapable, it was better for it to occur under an authoritarian, development-driven leader (de Waal 2013).

Table 3.6. De Facto Power in Ethiopia's Ruling Coalition, 1991-2005. I conceptualize junior partners in terms of tiers, as each partner was marginalized to different degrees without becoming excluded entirely.

Time	1991-2000	2001-5
Senior partner	TPLF (national and sub-national factions)	TPLF (led by Meles Zenawi)
Junior Partners "Tier 1"		ANDM
Junior Partners "Tier 2"	ANDM, OPDO, SEPDM	OPDO, SEPDM

People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) coalition (Young 1997). This put them in a good position to control the national government during the Transitional Government (1991-94) phase and then after the constitution's adoption.

Tigrayan control after 1991 was a function of their key positions in the economy and military. Because of the centrality of TPLF-EPRDF's party institutions discussed above – which prohibited factionalism and monitored performance– Tigrayan control minimized ethnic factionalism. This is because those who disagreed with TPLF directives were purged.

The Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) data used in chapter 2 characterizes Ethiopia's AEF between 1991-2005 as a system without Tigrayan domination per se. Instead, Tigrayans played the role of "senior partner," controlling most important positions in the national government. Meanwhile, Amharas and Oromos were "junior partners," controlling few important positions (Vogt et al. 2015). It is true that because of the de jure multi-ethnic ruling coalition, Tigrayans did not literally "dominate" Ethiopia. But the Tigrayan senior partners did increase their de facto domination after 1991.

As I discuss below, the contours of Ethiopia's "ethnic power relations" system changed subtly. Briefly, from 1991-2000, two TPLF factions (one in the national government, one in Tigray's sub-national government) acted as "senior partners." After the Eritrea War ended in 2000, the national government was effectively led by one TPLF leader, Meles Zenawi. Table 3.6 displays the ethnic relations within Ethiopia's ruling coalition during this period.

Figure 3.3 shows longitudinal data on Ethiopian cabinet ministers using Raleigh & Shephard's (2020) African Cabinet and Political Elite Data Project data, which begins in 1996.
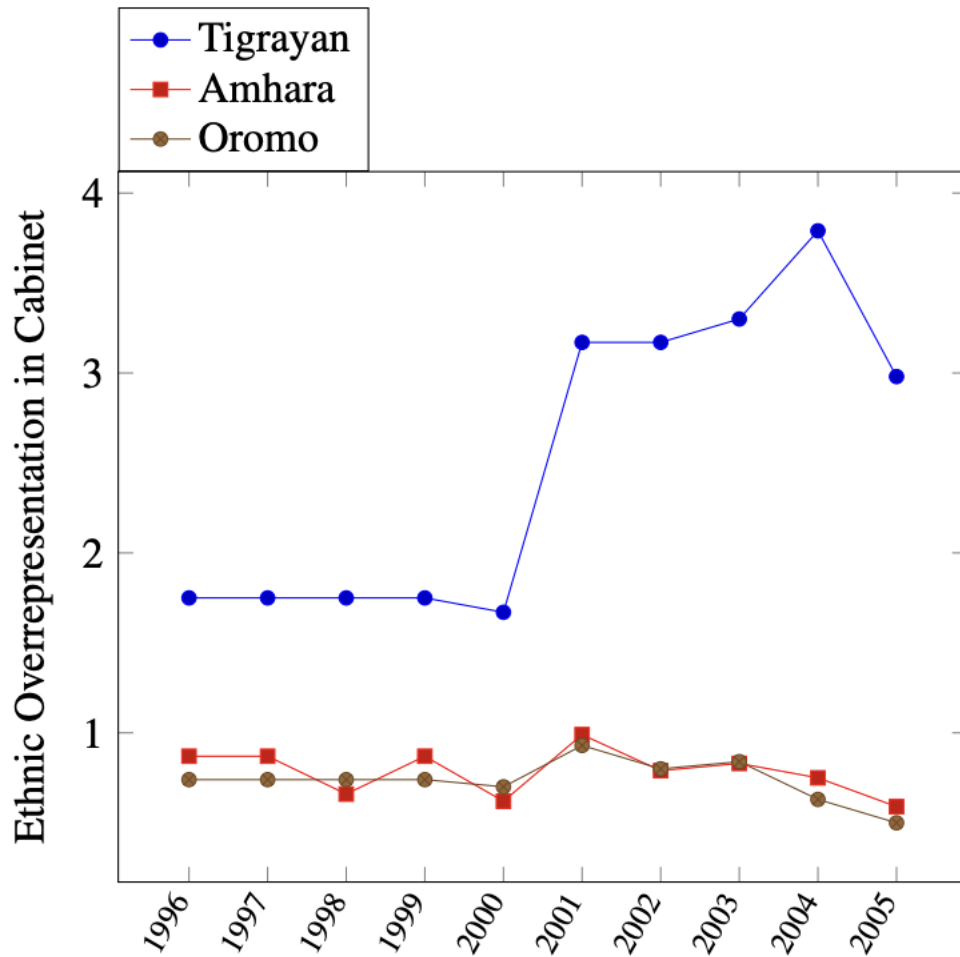
Figure 3.3. Degree of ethnic overrepresentation in Ethiopia's cabinet between 1996-2006. Source: Raleigh & Shephard (2020).

I use this data to calculate ethnic groups' over- and under-representation. The Y-axis quantity is the ratio of each ethnic group's percentage of seats divided by its percentage of the entire population. For example, in 2005, ethnic Tigrayans held 5/28 cabinet positions and constituted 6% of the population; their score is 3.0. Tigrayans' high and increasing over-representation is one data point evidencing exclusionary rule.

The origins of Tigrayan control lie in (a) TPLF's military and political background and (b) the correspondingly weak positions of its Amhara and Oromo comrades, the Oromo Democratic People's Organization (OPDO) and Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM) (Young 2021). Recall that TPLF created the national ruling coalition. Its leaders were skilled revolution-

aries who played a key role in ousting the *Derg*. They brought with them a degree of battlefield discipline that produced decisive political decision-making (Vaughan 2011). By contrast, OPDO had almost no political experience, having been recruited from *Derg* prisoners of war. In Amhara, TPLF-EPRDF's early exclusion of Amharas and Ethiopian nationalists from power (i.e., during the 1991-4 Transitional Government) left behind a weak Amhara leadership (Pausewang 2009). Ultimately, both the Amhara and Oromo partners became "shallow facades dependent on [TPLF] patronage and without an indigenous base" (Lyons 2019, 137). The non-TPLF parties within EPRDF regularly complained of "TPLF tutelage" and their exclusion from real decision-making (Habtu 2005, 332).

Although Tigrayan control was historically unsurprising, TPLF was not simply compelled to exercise such control. Instead, it actively accrued power within EPRDF, co-opting and repressing ANDM and OPDO elites, and vetting their selections to the EPRDF Central Committee (Breuning & Ishiyama 2021). TPLF's Central Committee, in which ANDM and OPDO elites did not participate, was the site of important decision-making (Milkias 2003, Lyons 2019).

It should be emphasized that many of the centralizing processes discussed above also furthered exclusion. This is because ethnic Tigrayans occupied key positions in the centralized national government and ruling coalition. For example, "democratic centralist" decision-making was introduced by a national government with Tigrayans at its helm.

A key source of Tigrayan power in the national government was economic. Recall that Tigray's leadership –especially after 2000– constructed a "developmental state" to direct Ethiopia's economy. Chanie's (2007) calculates that Tigrayan-controlled industries were valued at $446 million while Amhara- and Oromo-controlled industries were valued at a mere $42 million and $19 million, respectively (Chanie 2007). This asymmetry rendered Amhara and Oromo incumbents economically dependent on Tigrayans and thus unable to partake in decision-making as ethnic equals (Clapham 2004). Tigrayan economic control was in some ways a zero-sum game in that Tigray gained at the expense of its coalition partners. For example, revenues from coffee grown in Oromia flowed back to Tigrayan elites in Tigray (Emmenegger et

al. 2011).

3.3.3 The Eritrea War as a Centralizing, Exclusionary Event

The Eritrea War was a major event that furthered centralization and ethnic exclusion. In short, the war led to a decrease in the Tigray sub-national government's autonomy (centralization) and an increasing concentration of power in the hands of one ethnic Tigrayan leader, Meles Zenawi (exclusion). This created a stronger national government and one unencumbered by factionalism, which helps explain the 2005 autocratization.

Theoretically, I treat the Eritrea War as an event that increased centralization and exclusion. However, it should be noted that the war and ensuing purges could also be treated as a "crisis" along the lines of chapter 2. Indeed, as I discuss below, it is possible that an alternative outcome (e.g., one where purges were more effectively resisted) could have collapsed the Ethiopian state. However, I do not treat the Eritrea War as a crisis because it did not precede regime change. Instead it preceded further centralization and exclusion.

After Eritrea's secession in 1991, relations between Tigray and Eritrea deteriorated (Negash & Tronvoll 2000).[21] The disagreements were initially minor, such as EPRDF's worry that Eritrea's new currency would devalue Ethiopia's. In 1995, however, Eritrea's invasion of Yemen's Hanish Islands polarized TPLF. Tigrayan national incumbents, led by PM Meles Zenawi, thought it economically and diplomatically wise not to provoke Eritrea. By contrast, sub-national Tigrayan incumbents condemned the invasion and demanded a strong Ethiopian response. They denounced Meles' weakness, said to stem from his mother's Eritrean background. These intra-TPLF disagreements over the invasion stemmed from larger disagreements over the acceptability of economic liberalization, which national Tigrayan incumbents supported and

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[21]The two had a historically tense relationship: the Eritrean People's Liberation Front saw TPLF as its inferior against the *Derg* and denounced TPLF's "utopian" reliance on the peasantry (Young 1996). Nevertheless, both fronts agreed on the imperative of national self-determination. This was in contrast to the *Derg*'s nationalist opponents who stressed the territorial integrity of a "greater Ethiopia" that included Eritrea. The TPLF-led EPRDF permitted Eritrea's secession, albeit under international pressure. Secession angered the Ethiopian nationalist opposition, which saw the loss of Eritrea's Massawa trading port as harming Ethiopia's economic interests.

sub-national incumbents opposed.

In 1998, Tigray sub-national incumbents began trading hostile statements with Eritrea. Eritrea then attacked a Tigray border town and set off a two-year war, killing 70,000 (Negash & Tronvoll 2000). During the war, national and sub-national TPLF leaders disagreed over military tactics and objectives. Ethiopia eventually defeated Eritrea's weaker army.

After the war, TPLF's Central Committee met to evaluate their war performance (*gimgema*). At the meeting, Meles presented a paper[22] alleging that sub-national Tigrayans had betrayed their constituents (Clapham 2009). Meles called a vote affirming or negating his paper's thesis, prompting a walk-out from his sub-national opponents. He charged that the walk-out violated democratic centralism, an instance of treasonous "factionalism." An audit committee overturned Meles' charges, to which he responded that committee rulings do not apply during wartime. The audit committee ruling was nullified, after which time Meles's national government undertook widespread purges. Meles' sub-national opponents in Tigray (and elsewhere) were demoted, exiled, and imprisoned. Other TPLF elites defected to the US while on speaking tours. This was an extremely salient event: for Tadesse & Young (2003), the EPRDF coalition would have collapsed without a clear victor.

The war and ensuing purges had consequences for both centralization and exclusion. Meles' national government ultimately overpowered Tigray's sub-national government. Many of the latter were highly experienced (in warfare and governance), outranking their national government colleagues. And recall that Tigrayan sub-national incumbents controlled many lucrative enterprises (Lyons 2019). Ethiopia's national government thus became stronger in terms of its governing experience as well as it control over resources and security.

In addition to weakening Tigray's sub-national government, the purges enabled Meles to pursue his developmental state vision. This is sub-national opponents of economic liberalization had been neutralized. Indeed, the Tigray sub-national incumbents were mostly hard-line Marxist-

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[22]The 700-page paper analyzed growing problems of "Bonapartism" in EPRDF. This is the Marxian doctrine that revolutionary movements are liable to co-optation from counter-revolutionaries (like Napoleon Bonaparte) without genuine linkages to the proletariat.

Leninists who looked to the Soviet Union for economic inspiration. By contrast, Meles began to look at the 'Asian Tigers' (Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan) and China for inspiration. Importantly, the developmental state would require a centralized national government to produce development plans and allocate budgets down to sub-national governments (Vaughan 2015). Centralization led Vaughan & Tronvoll (2003, 22) to claim that after 2001, "the intentions, objectives, organization, and methods of the ruling party...[underwent] a greater sea change than at any time since the inception of the TPLF."

Meles' market-oriented developmental state made him a more favorable Western ally. He became a willing partner in the U.S.' war on terror in Somalia, Ethiopia's eastern neighbor. The new partnership also empowered the national government vis-a-vis sub-national governments: the national military was afforded new technologies and training opportunities, much of which it used to help manage sub-national conflict (Interview with federal police chief, 2018). However, western support was conditional on holding more free elections in 2005, which created a major crisis for EPRDF.

The purges straightforwardly increased centralization, but its effects on ethnic exclusion are less straightforward. On the one hand, Meles, without his longtime Tigrayan allies, increasingly relied on Amhara incumbents in making key decisions. This would seem to have increased Ethiopia's inclusion. On the other hand, power was increasingly concentrated in the hands of Meles – himself an ethnic Tigrayan– whose Amhara partners were arguably tokens and loyalists (Milkias 2003). An opposition leader (Interview 2023) described Meles as very adept at dividing Amharas during this period. Amharas' presence in Meles' inner circle obscured the increasing control of an ethnic Tigrayan leader. Meles' leadership would prove decisive in guarding against ethnic factionalism, especially after the 2005 elections. However, Meles' reliance on ethnic Amharas did plant the seeds for multi-ethnic decision-making at the national level; its fuller realization would have to wait until after Meles' death.

Finally, the war affected the content of the crisis that national incumbents would face in 2005. In particular, it led to an explosion of 'nationalist' ideology, which opposition parties

deployed during the 2005 elections. Recall that EPRDF was a coalition of ethno-nationalist parties, which proposed ethnofederalism as a solution to Ethiopia's centralized, exclusionary past. As such, EPRDF was reluctant to mobilize support for the war using nationalist language.[23] However, large numbers of Ethiopians supported the war effort –despite their antipathy to TPLF-EPRDF– on nationalist grounds. This included historically marginalized groups like Somalis who volunteered to fight (Tadesse & Young 2003). It also included Ethiopian nationalists, who resented Eritrea's secession in 1991 and the disintegration of "Greater Ethiopia" (Abbay 2004). EPRDF thus missed an opportunity to unite the country on nationalist grounds. Its opponents capitalized on this in 2005.

3.4   Crisis: 2005 Elections

This section discusses the crisis that prompted national incumbents to autocratize in 2005. The crisis was multifaceted: the opposition performed surprisingly well during national elections, it publicly denounced the centralized and exclusionary character of Ethiopia's AEF while campaigning, it claimed to speak for more "authentic" ethno-national interests than EPRDF, and it called for mass protests after the elections. I argue below that centralization and exclusion enabled national incumbents to respond to this crisis with authoritarian repression. (Appendix E analyzes ethnic politics in Tigray, Amhara, and Oromia to understand what fueled the opposition.)

The 2005 elections seemed to mark a departure from past elections under EPRDF. Some observers were even optimistic that 2005 would herald Ethiopia's full democratization (Lefort 2007). EPRDF's opposition was permitted to campaign relatively freely, access state media, and criticize EPRDF on social media (Gagliardone et al. 2019).[24] This increased electoral freedom was partly an effort to appease the United States, from whom PM Meles Zenawi's national

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[23]For example, it could not justify war as necessary for Ethiopia's "territorial integrity," which EPRDF saw as achieved through historical processes of colonization and enslavement.

[24]However, this was mostly an urban phenomenon. In rural areas, peasants could not understand why the ruling party would purposefully "weaken itself" by permitting competition. By giving access to its "enemies" on state media, EPRDF signaled to peasants that God had decided it should no longer rule. This may explain the opposition's surprising performance. Local-level EPRDF leaders intimidated rural voters (Lefort 2007).

government sought financial support for its developmental state (Abbink 2005b, Hagmann 2006). It was also likely a miscalculation: EPRDF did not see its opponents as viable, partly evidenced by the fact that Meles took no part in the election campaign. (EPRDF did not make such a miscalculation again after 2005, winning 95% and 100% of parliamentary seats in the 2010 and 2015 national elections, respectively (Arriola & Lyons 2016).)

Two opposition coalitions did surprisingly well, winning a combined 171/547 parliamentary seats (31%). Their support was most pronounced in Addis Ababa (100% of the seats), Amhara (42%), and Oromia (13%) (Smith 2007). The former two areas are hotbeds of anti-ethnofederal, anti-Tigrayan, and pro-nationalist sentiment (Breines 2021). The latter was especially salient in 2005, as the Eritrea War was accompanied by nationalist calls to reclaim historic Ethiopian territory in Eritrea.

To see how the election presented such a serious challenge to EPRDF, we can analyze the opposition United Ethiopian Democratic Forces (UEDF) and Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) coalitions in more detail. UEDF's support was highest among Oromos and southern Sidamas. Both groups saw themselves as falsely promised an end to centralized, exclusionary rule. Most simply, UEDF supported ethnofederalism but opposed its manifestation under TPLF-EPRDF. It appealed to "genuine" Oromo interests like substantive autonomy, which EPRDF's Oromo party struggled to do.

More successful than UEDF was the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD), whose support was greatest among multi-ethnic urbanites and ethnic Amharas. CUD supporters were critical of ethnofederalism, which they saw as an instrument of ethnic Tigrayan domination. CUD's coalition was led by the All Ethiopia Unity Party, which succeeded the All Amhara People's Organization (AAPO).[25] CUD's 2005 party programme said "It is the conspiracy between our foreign enemies and the *banda* to divide the country by highlighting differences. In this instance of 'divide and rule,' the Amhara became the target of the blame" (Tronvoll & Aalen

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[25]Recall that AAPO was the 1991-94 transitional government's most vocal critic of ethnofederalism. Its eventual exclusion aggrieved Amharas and multi-ethnic Ethiopians.

2009, 205). *Bandas* are foreign collaborators; because of their social and geographic distance from the historic Amhara heartland, Tigrayans have sometimes been called *banda* and suspected of foreign collaboration. Further, recall that ethnofederalism was seen by many Amharas as a foreign imposition (by TPLF, in tandem with Eritrea and the U.S.) to destroy Ethiopia. In other words, *banda* can be a dog whistle for Tigrayans. The programme's emphasis on Amhara targeting implies Tigray's complicity because of TPLF's doctrine of Amhara historical domination. After the election, CUD leader Berhanu Nega said "We have seen the extreme savagery and lawlessness of the *Woyane* regime." (Tronvoll & Aalen 2009, 204). *Woyane* refers to Tigray's historic resistance to the Haile Selassie regime in 1943, which some Amharas deemed treasonous. It is clear that Berhanu and CUD were aggrieved by Tigrayan control, and that these grievances were used to mobilize constituents.[26] In both CUD and UEDF one can identify a challenge to the centralized, exclusionary status quo.

After the election results came in, CUD alleged that it won a majority, accused EPRDF of fraud, and demanded a recount. Fraud was likely, and observers found that the election did not meet international standards (Abbink 2006a). However, EPRDF's centralized control over Ethiopia perhaps better explains the outcome: CUD and UEDF won where they campaigned, but were too poorly resourced to reach more than 20% of the electorate. CUD said that without a recount it would not assume its parliamentary seats. EPRDF refused a recount, leading to mass protests across Ethiopia, particularly in Addis Ababa. CUD further called for a "color revolution" –as had occurred in Ukraine and Georgia– to remove EPRDF (Fiseha 2019).

The combination of opposition success and mass protests represented the first major *public* challenge to EPRDF's centralized, Tigrayan-controlled regime. (Recall that the Eritrea War represented a private challenge that played out in party committees.) The next section discusses EPRDF's autocratizing response to the crisis.

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[26]Berhanu Nega was a key opposition figure during Ethiopia's 2018 liberalization and 2019 autocratization.

Table 3.7. Indicators of Ethiopia's 2005 Autocratization. Source: Varieties of Democracy (Coppedge et al. 2023).

Indicator	Change from 2005 to 2006	% Decrease
Opposition Party Autonomy	.22 → .13	40
Harassment of Journalists	-.53 → -.95	80
Freedom of Assembly	-.87 → -1.28	47
Government Censorship	-.54 → -1.3	140
Civil Liberties	.39 → .27	25

3.5   Autocratization

Consistent with the chapter 2 theory, Ethiopian national incumbents responded to the 2005 election crisis with several autocratizing measures. First, protesters were repressed. Over 200 people died and 50,000 were arrested (Berhanu 2003). Public demonstrations were banned after the initial protests. Second, many opposition politicians, especially those who refused to take their seats, were imprisoned and charged with terrorism.[27] Third, several laws were passed in order to marginalize opposition parties. (This reflected EPRDF's fear that CUD would take its seats in government, which mass protests and state repression precluded.) One law prevented parliamentary minorities from placing bills on the agenda (Tronvoll & Aalen 2009). Finally, journalists were jailed and independent media was censored (Abbink 2005a). As evidence that autocratization occurred, Table 3.7 lists five relevant indicators. What can explain Ethiopia's autocratization?

Alternative Explanations

Before providing evidence for my own explanation of Ethiopia's 2005 autocratization, I discuss three alternative explanations. These emphasize Ethiopian political culture, incumbent time horizons, and the Eritrea War. I find these alternatives less compelling than my own because

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[27]The opposition was repeatedly told "that their freedom was symbolized by a 'chicken with a long rope'...limited by the length of the rope [afforded to it by EPRDF]" (Fiseha 2019, 75).

all three leave unclear *why* Ethiopian national incumbents were able to autocratize in 2005.

A first explanation highlights general features of Ethiopia's political "culture" in creating and reproducing authoritarianism (Abbink 2006). This "culture of power" is one where incumbents are allegedly unwilling to cede power in elections, challengers unwilling to settle for anything less than complete victory, and citizen-subjects unable or unwilling to challenge the status quo (Vaughan & Tronvoll 2003). For Abbink (2006, 177-8)

> An old saying in Ethiopia is: 'He who does not "eat" while in power, will regret it when he is out.' This still holds. So next to...a conception of power as a cherished prize and as indivisible...the state resembles a domain of personalized power.

There are several problems with this explanation. First, it seems to assume that Ethiopian cultural identities are homogeneous and unchanging (Hagmann 2006). But if this is true, how can this unchanging "culture of power" account for autocratizing regime changes? In addition, this explanation leaves unclear *why* incumbents were able to continue treating the state as their "personalized domain" during such a serious election crisis. I argue that incumbents were enabled by centralization and ethnic exclusion.

A second explanation highlights the longevity of Ethiopia's national government in necessitating autocratization (Clapham 2005). After 14 years in power, Ethiopian citizens were ostensibly exhausted by centralized, Tigrayan rule and thus desired change (Samatar 2005). This signaled to Meles' national government that they could only stay in power by autocratizing.

This explanation is more convincing in its focus on specific features of Ethiopia's national government as opposed to general features of Ethiopian society. However, it similarly leaves unanswered why the national government was able to autocratize. In other words, citing Meles' goal to stay in power does not make clear whether the conditions were such that he could act accordingly. In addition, this explanation cannot make sense of Ethiopia's 2018 liberalization: if autocratization was necessary for the regime to stay in power in 2005, why would national incumbents ever liberalize? This leads to the strange conclusion that liberalization indicated the leadership's desire to leave power.

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A third explanation highlights TPLF's fragmentation after the Eritrea War, which allegedly produced a weak national government that could only survive by autocratizing (Clapham 2005). This explanation is additionally convincing in its focus on events that shaped the ruling coalition. And it is true that the Eritrea War destabilized Ethiopia. However, I argued above that Meles' purges after the Eritrea War created a stronger and more exclusive national government. In other words, this explanation makes clear why autocratization was necessary. But it also implies that doing so would have been impossible due to the government's weakness.

Effects of Centralization and Exclusion on National Incumbents' Incentives

Ethiopia's 2005 autocratization –which followed a serious crises and occurred under centralized, exclusive conditions– is consistent with my theoretical sequence. But did centralization and exclusion actually empower national incumbents to respond to the protests with authoritarian repression? In other words, to what extent did EPRDF's response evidence a high degree of strength and decisiveness? I discuss three processes that help shed light on these questions: the absence of inter-governmental and inter-ethnic bargaining, sub-national gerrymandering, and the increased importance of developmental policy.

A first piece of evidence is that the national government's response involved almost no debate or bargaining with either (1) sub-national incumbents (evidencing centralization), or (2) non-Tigrayan elites (evidencing exclusion) (Clapham 2009). More specifically, the response evidenced Meles Zenawi's singular power in EPRDF, which had increased since the 2001 purges. According to Vaughan (2011, 632),

> there is little evidence that the EPRDF leadership regarded...[the election and protests] as anything other than the usual plebiscite: losing power in 2005, even in one or two parts of the federation, does not seem to have been an option that the [national] ruling party contemplated.

The national government saw its power as flowing seamlessly from the center throughout the federation.

Counterfactually, if the national government was beholden to sub-national or non-

Tigrayan incumbents, then its response to the crisis may have required bargaining. For example, in a more decentralized system, perhaps sub-national incumbents would have tried to bargain for a less repressive response. This is not unimaginable, as sub-national incumbents could have feared that (a) repression would aggrieve their constituents and (b) quelling sub-national instability would be costly. Indeed, Ethiopia's sub-national police forces are comparatively weaker and less experienced than the federal military and police (Interview with local police chief, 2018).

To take another counterfactual, in a more decentralized system, capable sub-national incumbents could have credibly threatened to ally with EPRDF's opposition in order to extract concessions from the national government. Consider Amhara sub-national incumbents, who resented their subservience to the Tigrayan-led TPLF: If Amhara elites had been stronger, perhaps they would have threatened to denounce EPRDF unless they received guarantees for increased power within EPRDF. This kind of bargaining was exactly what happened during the 2014-18 protest crisis discussed in chapter 4: empowered sub-national incumbents allied with pro-democracy protesters, which prolonged the crisis and prompted democratic concessions in 2018.

A second piece of evidence, reported by Mezgebe (2015), is that after autocratizing in 2005, the national government gerrymandered zonal and local districts. This was done in order to fragment areas of opposition support during the 2005 elections and to prevent subsequent crises. Gerrymandering would seem to evidence the national government's centralized control over sub-national incumbents, the latter of whom were unable to resist attempts to redraw their jurisdictions.

Counterfactually, sub-national incumbents in a more decentralized system would have resisted gerrymandering, which tends to change constituency demographics. For example, politicians' constituencies may be gerrymandered to include more non-co-ethnics, requiring different mobilization strategies. Or, politicians reliant on patronage or bribery may see their constituencies gerrymandered to include wealthier citizens, increasing the costs of campaigning.

Simply, if the national government had been less centralized, then gerrymandering might have encountered resistance. In fact, the 2014-18 protests evidenced the opposite phenomenon: sub-national incumbents in Oromia sided with protesters, forcefully denouncing the national government's attempts to gerrymander Oromia's borders.

A third piece of evidence is that the national government's main *policy* response (i.e., apart from responses related to autocratization like repression) was to expand Ethiopia's developmental state (Young 2021). Recall that this was a project led by Tigrayans in the national government, and one that depended on its control over sub-national incumbents who implemented developmental goals (Clapham 2017). De Waal (2018, 6) reports that Meles Zenawi analyzed the elections and protests from his "developmentalist" orientation: the protesters, despite demanding greater political freedoms, *actually* wanted greater economic freedoms: "We need our people to internalize [development]; to drink it, to breathe it." Ethiopia's development strategy involved expanding communications, roads, rail networks, higher education, healthcare services, and hydroelectricity, most notably the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dem project (Clapham 2018). These projects were funded through domestic savings, external development aid, and foreign direct investment. All three of these funding sources were managed by the national government (Vaughan 2015).

Counterfactually, if the national government had been more decentralized and dependent on sub-national incumbents, then Ethiopia's policy response may have reflected sub-national interests. For example, Amhara opponents of the national government agitated between 1991-2005 for a toning down of ethnic politics and emphasis on national (as opposed to ethno-national) identity. More capable Amhara sub-national incumbents may have demanded less of a focus on economic development and more of a focus on changing the ethnofederal constitution.

The 2005 election and autocratization response had implications for Ethiopia's centralization and exclusion. First, the scope of Ethiopia's centralized, developmental state project increased considerably after 2005. Party membership in EPRDF also increased (Vaughan 2014).

Co-opting much of Ethiopian society into EPRDF was seen as essential to preventing another crisis, combining elements of patronage (e.g., fertilizer distribution) and surveillance (Aalen 2014). For example, a "one-to-five" network was implemented where one party member would monitor five others in all facets of government (civil service, peasant organizations, college campuses, etc.) (Emmenegger et al. 2011).

Second, the electoral success of two nationalist, inter-ethnic opposition coalitions made it clear that Tigrayan exclusionary control was unsustainable (de Waal 2018). As I discuss in the next chapter, TPLF's share of cabinet seats declined after 2005, while the seat shares of EPRDF's Amhara, Oromo, and southern parties increased (Smith & Opalo 2021). This set the stage for the empowerment of non-Tigrayans (ethnic inclusion) and sub-national governments (decentralization).

3.6   Conclusion

This chapter provided evidence for each component of the chapter 2 theoretical sequence. There I hypothesized that in autocratic ethnofederations (AEFs) that are centralized and ethnically exclusive, national incumbents are more likely to resolve crises through repression. This is because centralization and exclusion empower the national government and free it from inter-ethnic disagreement.

First, I showed that Ethiopia became and remained centralized and exclusive during the 1991-2005 period. This occurred through a constitution that favored the national government, a ruling coalition that brought with it centralized modes of decision-making, and ethnic Tigrayan control over the national government, ruling coalition, and security sector. The 1998-2000 Eritrea War accelerated these processes, as sub-national incumbents were purged (centralization) and a single Tigrayan leader increasingly controlled the national government (exclusion). Centralization and exclusion created a strong and decisive national government, which enabled incumbents to deploy repression in 2005.

Second, I showed that the 2005 elections seriously challenged the national government. The opposition won an unprecedented 31% of the vote and mass protests destabilized several parts of the country. This motivated the national government to autocratize, which centralization and exclusion enabled. And finally, I showed that the national government did in fact autocratize, repressing protesters, imprisoning opponents, and censoring news media. This autocratizing response reflected the decision-making of a national government that was unencumbered by sub-national incumbents or inter-ethnic disagreement.

The next chapter discusses a period of decentralization and ethnic inclusion. Prime Minister Meles Zenawi's death in 2012 plays a similar role in chapter 4 to that of the Eritrea War discussed above. Sub-national governments became more assertive after Meles' death, while Meles' replacement –an ethnic Welayta– made the national government more inclusive. Mass protests between 2014-18 (like the 2005 elections discussed above) seriously challenged the national government; the latter ultimately responded to this crisis by liberalizing in 2018. I explain these changes by reference to national government incumbents' (1) increasing dependence on sub-national incumbents (decentralization) who sided with pro-democracy challengers and (2) diversity of ethnic elites in the national ruling coalition (inclusion), which precluded a decisive response to the protests and prompted democratic concessions.

3.7 Appendix D: Ethiopia and Ethnofederal Theory

This appendix situates Ethiopia's autocratic ethnofederation in the broader ethnofederalism literature. Ultimately, Ethiopia's AEF has confirmed arguments made by both critics and supporters of AEF, as discussed in chapter 2. AEF has both mitigated ethnic conflict (e.g., by permitting ethnic groups to choose sub-national languages) and exacerbated it (e.g., by pitting groups against one another in competition for resources). These seemingly academic issues were significant during each case of regime change. For example, Ethiopia's 2005 autocratization followed electoral challenges by "nationalist" opposition elites who detested AEF for its

politicization of ethnic identity.

Confirming the claims of AEF's critics, some ethnic identities have been politicized during Ethiopia's post-1991 period. For example, ethnic Amhara identities have historically been weaker than provincial identities. However, the creation of an Amhara sub-national government made "Amhara-ness" a visible and (contentious) part of public discourse.[28] In the multi-ethnic, Southern sub-national government, elites have exaggerated intra-ethnic differences in order to create new districts, obtain governmental positions therein, and exclude outsiders (Abbink 2006a). Although linguistic autonomy has empowered groups to speak local languages, observers argue that learning the Amharic language is still necessary for social advancement (Abbink 1998). However, sub-national elites are rewarded by campaigning on anti-Amharic platforms, making their constituents economically worse off.

The demographics of Ethiopia's sub-national governments have also exacerbated conflict. Oromos living in Amhara have been targeted by Amhara police as alleged members of the Oromo Liberation Front, while Amharas living in Oromia have been targeted as alleged descendants of slave-owners (Yusuf 2019). Ethnic minorities live under sub-national domination while multi-ethnic citizens must prioritize one identity (Abbink 1998, Erk 2017). Ethnically defined borders have disrupted historic ties, trade routes, and migration patterns (Mengie 2015). A rigid constitutional amendment process froze these borders (and Ethiopian identities more generally) in place (de Waal 2018). Constitutional asymmetries, like the Oromia region's jurisdiction over Addis Ababa, have created resentment and fear among non-Oromos, who worry they will be resettled or harmed by sub-national security forces (Yusuf 2019). More generally, resource asymmetries have encouraged ethnocentric views that *these* regions are filled with ethnic hoarders while *those* are filled with ethnic leeches (Abbink 1997).

Politicized ethnic identities have been used in furtherance of violence, as groups fight

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[28]For example, Ethiopia's imperial expansion depended on northern riflemen or *neftegnas* to brutally ensure order in the south. *Neftegnas* were mostly from the province of Shewa (today part of Amhara), but a not insignificant number were ethnic Oromos who betrayed their co-ethnics. With the increased salience of Amhara identities, it is now common for non-Amhara Ethiopians to conflate *neftegna* and Amhara, leading to conflict, violence, and a sense of Amhara victimhood (Tazebew 2021).

one another over resources and the state deploys repression (Abbink 2006a). During Meles Zenawi's premiership (2001-2012), "narrow nationalist" politicians were violently purged and imprisoned (Lyons 2019). Yet authoritarianism has counteracted genuine self-rule and shared rule, themselves necessary for federal stability (Anderson 2012). After Meles' death, centrifugal pressures became harder to control, accelerating in the 2014-18 protests that prompted Ethiopia's 2018 liberalization (Fisseha 2019). Because the constitution permits secession, any conflict can become one of potentially violent state collapse.

Proponents of Ethiopia's autocratic ethnofederation respond to these claims in several ways. First, they note that Ethiopian ethnic identities had been politicized for a long time before AEF. Indeed, it was multiple *ethnic* liberation fronts that overthrew the *Derg* and denounced its covert promotion of an Amhara identity. Proponents note that historically marginalized groups value the ability to speak local languages and be represented by their co-ethnics (Teka & Tadesse 2020). Although new kinds of sub-national conflicts have emerged, there has been a reduction in violent, *national* liberation struggles, a huge achievement in one of the world's most violent regions (Vaughan 2015, Fisseha 2018). Indeed, Ethiopia's AEF was free of civil war until 2020, whereas the unitary *Derg* (1974-91) fought on multiple fronts. The constitution's secession clause may pose *potential* challenges, but ethnofederal autonomy has ostensibly decreased secessionist sentiment (Berhanu 2003). Focusing on individual conflict snapshots may cause one to lose sight of the big picture, namely that Ethiopia's AEF has lasted over 30 years, an achievement given the brevity of many AEF experiments (Anderson 2012). Ethnofederal proponents see Ethopia's AEF as problematic more because of its centralization, exclusion, and autocracy.

3.8   Appendix E: Ethiopian Sub-National Politics, 1991-2005

Sub-national politics in Tigray, Amhara, and Oromia were intertwined with centralization and exclusion as well as the 2005 election crisis. This appendix discusses salient political dynamics in each regional state, including the legitimacy of ethno-nationalist politics, ethnofederalism,

centralization, and Tigrayan rule, as well as the capacities of opposition groups.

Among many Tigrayans, TPLF leaders during the 1991-2005 period were seen as legitimate because of their revolutionary sacrifices (Abebe 2016). Ordinary Tigrayans needed little convincing that TPLF "authentically" represented them, whereas ordinary Amharas and Oromos did need such convincing (Young 1997). At the same time, TPLF effectively repressed Tigrayan opponents, denouncing them as covert *Derg* supporters or chauvinists (Mezgebe 2015).[29] For example, several opposition parties *outside* Tigray espoused anti-Tegaru sentiments, but TPLF would falsely denounce its competitors *inside* Tigray as collaborators (Milkias 2003). TPLF's exclusionary project was thus maintained with little difficult in Tigray.

Tigrayan rule was more problematic in Amhara and in Ethiopia's multi-ethnic, Amharic-speaking urban areas. These areas –especially the capital Addis Ababa– are characterized by high levels of Ethiopian nationalist sentiment (Ayele & De Visser 2017). However, TPLF's historical narrative was *ethno*-nationalist: Ethiopian history was one of Amhara ethnic domination[30] that culminated in TPLF's singular heroism. This narrative was offensive and aggrieving to the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM) and its constituents, who themselves suffered under the *Derg*. Exclusion was thus seen as based on historical fabrication and Tigrayan bigotry.

For many Amharas and multi-ethnic urbanites, ethnofederalism was the ultimate tool of Tigrayan control, serving to "divide and rule" Ethiopians along ethnic lines (Mehretu 2012).[31] TPLF's relationship with Eritrea and the US's support for EPRDF rule intensified this perception: autocratic ethnofederalism was imposed by international forces intent on colonizing or destroying Ethiopia.[32] Most Amharas did not benefit from symbolic devolution, which, as I argued above,

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[29]For example, the Tigray Alliance for National Democracy, led by an exiled TPLF founder, was forced to operate from the diaspora (Vaughan and Tronvoll 2003).

[30]Ultimately, Amhara was and remains a poor region; its residents were not beneficiaries of feudal autocracy. Ethiopia's feudal emperors were mostly from the Shewa province, just one part of current-day Amhara (Clapham 1975). Most Amharas were exploited under feudalism, albeit less than Oromos, who were not part of the Orthodox Christian land tenure system and were entirely dispossessed (Markakis and Nega 1978).

[31]Amhara feelings of exclusion sometimes led them to yearn for past unitary regimes. Indeed, at least Haile Selassie or the *Derg* did not explicitly politicize ethnicity and blame Amharas for Ethiopia's problems (Vaughan 2005).

[32]This was arguably a misperception: TPLF had an historically antagonistic relationship with both Eritrea (because Eritrea saw itself as superior to TPLF) and the US (because of TPLF's Marxist-Leninist background)

was Ethiopia's key source of decentralization: they either continued to speak Amharic as before or found themselves forced to learn new languages in other regions. Ethnofederalism was thus perceived as an oppressive imposition, an affirmative action program to exclude Amharas and empower Tigrayans (Lyons 2019).[33] Finally, many Amharas saw TPLF as not only as introducing perverse forms of ethnic politics but as annexing historic Amhara lands.[34]

The Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM) had to walk a fine line in sympathizing with its constituents without provoking TPLF. Indeed, ANDM generated only 20% of its expenditures through sub-national revenues and thus depended on the TPLF-controlled national government (Chanie 2007). ANDM had mixed success in repressing opposition parties, those aggrieved by Tigrayan control. Recall that during the 1991-4 Transitional Government, EPRDF marginalized and arrested leaders from the All Amhara People's Organization (AAPO). This effectively ended opposition politics among Amharas and multi-ethnic urbanites through 2004. The opposition parties who fared well in Ethiopia's 2005 elections mobilized these sentiments of Tigrayan divide and rule.[35] These parties re-branded themselves as nationalists, denigrating ANDM for its ethno-nationalism (Yusuf 2019, Tazebew 2021).

Finally, EPRDF's centralized and exclusive project faced challenges in Oromia. Here Tigrayan faces were seen as replacing Amhara ones in the continuation of an "Abyssinian" empire (Tronvoll 2009). Although many Oromos (unlike Amharas) appreciated symbolic devolution, they resented the high degree of Tigrayan central control (Bulcha 1997).

EPRDF's Oromo affiliate, the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO), greatly expanded EPRDF membership in the region, due largely to its control over agricultural resources (Emmenegger et al. 2011). However, OPDO struggled to mobilize its constituents on the basis of identity. This is because many of its constituents were sympathetic to secession and substantive

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(Young 1996).

[33]Tigray's continued impoverishment does not corroborate this latter perception.

[34]The Patriotic Ginbot 7 insurgency agitated for Amhara to reclaim historic territories that are now in Tigray, which was a crucial issue during the 2020-22 Tigray civil war (Young 2021).

[35]These sentiments dominate Ethiopia's relatively affluent diaspora (Lyons 2007), some of whom assisted in the 2005 campaigning.

devolution, which TPLF deemed unacceptable. The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), which had a more genuine linkage with several parts of Oromia, continued its insurgency against EPRDF.[36] OPDO's war against OLF was thus seen as TPLF's war against Oromia and Oromo autonomy.[37] And indeed, OPDO regularly accused its opponents of being OLF members, further aggrieving Oromo constituents (Schaefer 2012). This security imperative made Oromia a highly repressive region (Hassen 2002).

TPLF's relations with OPDO were marked with the former's sense of superiority. Because OPDO was recruited from *Derg* prisoners of war, TPLF neither respected them (due to members' lack of political experience) nor trusted them (due to widespread Oromo sympathies toward secession). OPDO leaders alleged that TPLF forced them to sign pre-written decrees and abuse human rights in the region (Milkias 2003). Prime Minister Meles Zenawi said of OPDO:

> we [TPLF] control power and as can be expected those who are attached to us [sub-national leaders] do benefit because they can advance their own interests. Honey attracts flies [as opposed to useful bees]...in Oromia, in particular, we have been forced to build and then destroy our organizational work. We recruit large numbers of people in government work. We find them to be like flies...We toss them away (Milkias 2003, 32).

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[36]OLF's guerilla tactics meant that it also struggled to connect with constituents for fear of exposing itself to central reprisal (Østebø & Tronvoll 2020).

[37]OLF's aspirations for an autonomous or even independent Oromia informed the 2014-18 protests resulting in liberalization in 2018.

Chapter 4

Ethiopia's 2018 Liberalization

4.1   Introduction

This chapter presents the second of three case studies of regime change in Ethiopia's autocratic ethnofederation (AE). I explain Ethiopia's 2018 liberalization[1] using the chapter 2 theory of AEFs regime changes.

The chapter 2 theory explains different regime change outcomes (autocratization vs. democratization) by reference to different combinations of centralization and ethnic exclusion, which affect how national incumbents respond to serious crises. Recall that in AEFs that are centralized and exclusive, national incumbents and strong and ethnically unified enough to respond with repression. By contrast, in AEFs that are decentralized and inclusive, national incumbents are too weak and ethnically fractured to respond with repression. In order to resolve the crisis, incumbents may need to make democratic concessions.

Chapter 2 provided preliminary support for the claim that incumbents in decentralized, inclusive AEFs respond to crises with democracy. However, more is required to establish that Ethiopia's 2018 democratic reforms followed the theorized sequence. This chapter does just that, showing that (a) Ethiopia's AEF became increasingly decentralized and inclusive and (b) national incumbents responded to a serious crisis with democratic concessions. The central story

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[1]Note that I examine changes within Ethiopia's "electoral autocracy." Chapters 3 and 5 explain regression episodes and this chapter explains a liberalization episode. These episodes neither reverted Ethiopia to "closed autocracy" nor pushed it to "electoral democracy" (Coppedge et al. 2023).

of this chapter is that (a) disabled national incumbents from resolving the crisis via authoritarian repression. Instead, decentralization and inclusion ultimately forced democratic concessions. My argument is diagrammed in Figure 4.1.

Institutional Structure	**Decentralization:** Death of strongman PM Meles Zenawi leads to defiant sub-national governments. **Inclusion:** Meles' death leads to inclusion of non-Tigrayans.
⬇	⬇
Response to 2014-18 mass protest crisis	**Liberalization, 2018:** National government paralyzed by sub-national defiance and inter-ethnic disagreement. Cannot respond effectively to protests and concedes liberal reforms.

Figure 4.1. Ethiopia's 2018 Liberalization Sequence. Decentralization and ethnic inclusion disabled national incumbents from resolving crises with authoritarian repression.

This chapter proceeds as follows. In section 4.2 I show that Ethiopia's AEF became more decentralized and ethnically inclusive, especially after 2012. Prime Minister Meles Zenawi's death in 2012 was a key event in this trajectory. Meles was replaced by a non-Tigrayan, which made the national government more inclusive. And because Meles was such a powerful figure in Ethiopian politics, sub-national incumbents became more assertive after his death, denouncing and acting to undermine national directives. In turn, national government incumbents were unable to control their sub-national critics. My evidence for this section comes from cabinet ethnicity data, survey data, and secondary literature.

I then show in section 4.3 that mass protests between 2014-18 seriously challenged the national government. This crisis motivated national incumbents to respond by making democratic concessions. The protests stemmed from allegations that the national government would annex land in the Oromia and Amhara regions. Their cross-regional and ethno-national nature rendered

the protests particularly challenging. My evidence for this section comes from original interview data, conflict and fatality data, and secondary literature.

National incumbents responded to the crisis with an erratic mix of repression and inaction. I explain this response by reference to the decentralized, inclusive processes discussed above. Sub-national governments were strong enough to resist cooperating with the national government to resolve the protests. Meanwhile, the national government was too ethnically fractured to produce a decisive response. The protests themselves accelerated incumbent divisions, particularly the division between those allied with or hostile to the protesters. One incumbent faction, notably comprised of sub-national Oromo and Amhara incumbents, allied with protesters in denouncing the national government.

Finally, I show in section 4.4 that Ethiopia's national government made democratic concessions in 2018. I begin by discussing PM Hailemariam Desalegn's initial democratizing changes as well as his resignation. I then discuss PM Abiy Ahmed's selection as well as its significance for liberalization. My evidence for this section comes from original interview data, disaggregated democracy data, and secondary literature.

Appendix F provides data on the variety of Ethiopian elite responses to PM Abiy's selection as well as his democratizing reforms. The appendix shows that although the events of 2018 were mostly well-received, elites were not universally optimistic. Understanding this helps preview some of the elite divisions central to Ethiopia's autocratization in 2019.

Between 2006 and 2018, changes to Ethiopia's Prime Minister's Office had implications for each step of my theoretical sequence. These changes included the death, succession, and resignation of different PMs. As such, Table 4.1 displays Ethiopia's three PMs and their relevance for centralization and ethnic exclusion, the protest crisis, and liberalization.

Table 4.2 displays three actors who were particularly important for generating Ethiopia's 2018 liberalization outcome. Figure 4.2 timelines the period under consideration.

As in chapter 3, Ethiopia's national government is understood here as a "party-state complex" (Levitsky & Way 2022). This means that roughly the same incumbents controlled

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Table 4.1. Three Ethiopian Prime Ministers, 2006-18.

Prime Minister, Tenure (Ethnicity)	Significance for 2018 Liberalization
Meles Zenawi, 1995-2012 (Tigrayan)	Death in 2012 decreases Tigrayan exclusion and increases sub-national assertiveness
Hailemariam Desalegn, 2012-18 (Welayta)	His weakness exacerbates inter-ethnic disagreement and sub-national assertiveness, could not resolve protest challenge, began liberalization
Abiy Ahmed, 2018- (Oromo)	Denounced national government during protest challenge, furthered liberalization

Table 4.2. Key Political Groups in Ethnofederal Ethiopia, 2006-18.

Actor	Significance for 2018 Liberalization
Tigrayan incumbents	Weakened and fractured after PM Meles Zenawi's death in 2012, denounced by protesters during crisis, fractured during PM Abiy's selection, weakened during liberalization
Amhara and Oromo incumbents	Empowered after Meles' death, allied with protesters in denouncing Tigrayan rule, unified during Abiy's selection, strengthened during liberalization
Amhara and Oromo opposition	Helped organize mass protest challenge, partially incorporated into political system during liberalization

the national government and national ruling coalition (Aalen 2014). Thus, Ethiopia's national government and national coalition both became more inclusive between 2012-18. Similarly, its national government became less powerful vis-a-vis sub-national governments, and its national ruling coalition less powerful vis-a-vis sub-national ruling parties.

2012 ····· •	Key decentralizing, inclusive event: PM Meles Zenawi dies, succeeded by non-Tigrayan.
2014 ····· •	**Crisis**: Protests begin in Oromia region.
2016 ····· •	Protests spread to Amhara region.
10/2016 ····· •	National government declares first State of Emergency.
08/2017 ····· •	First State of Emergency ends.
01/2018 ····· •	**Liberalization**: national government releases 500+ political prisoners.
02/2018 ····· •	PM Hailemariam resigns, national government declares second State of Emergency.
04/2018 ····· •	PM Abiy Ahmed selected.
06/2018 ····· •	Second State of Emergency ends.
06/2018 ····· •	5 opposition parties legalized.
07/2018 ····· •	1000+ political prisoners released.
11/2018 ····· •	60+ officials arrested for human rights abuses.

Figure 4.2. Ethiopia's Liberalization Timeline, 2012-18.

4.2   Decentralization and Ethnic Inclusion

This section characterizes Ethiopia's autocratic ethnofederation between 2006-2018 in terms of its increasing decentralization and ethnic inclusion. These trends –listed in Table 4.3– weakened the national government and disabled it from resolving the 2014-18 protest crisis with authoritarian repression. Instead, national incumbents were compelled to make democratic concessions.

The Ethnic Power Relations data set used in chapters 2-3 characterizes Ethiopia between

Table 4.3. Decentralization and Inclusion in Ethiopia, 2012-18.

Sources of Inclusion	Sources of Decentralization
Intra-Tigrayan divisions empower non-Tigrayans	Sub-national incumbents denounce national government
National institutions (e.g., cabinet positions) created to accommodate non-Tigrayans	Sub-national incumbents undermine national policy directives
Higher incumbency rates among non-Tigrayans	Sub-national incumbents campaign on radical, ethno-national platforms

2006-18 as a system where Tigrayans remained "senior partners," controlling most important positions in the national government (Vogt et al. 2015). However, the African Cabinet and Political Elite Data Project suggests decreasing overrepresentation of ethnic Tigrayans, as shown in Figure 4.3 (Raleigh & Shephard 2020). This is one data point evidencing progressive inclusion.

In spite of Hailemariam creating a more inclusive national government, Tigrayan control continued in several respects after Meles' death (Young 2021, Zahorik 2017). Most importantly, Tigrayan elites controlled large parts of the economy (e.g., state owned enterprises) and military (Lyons 2018). The national security advisor was always a Tigrayan between 2006-18 (Raleigh & Wigmore 2020). In fact, coincident with Hailemariam's selection, 37 new military generals were appointed, 23 of whom were from Tigray (Lefort 2012). Meles had depended upon these military elites for his increasingly "big-man" style of rule to function effectively. A former member of the House of Federation said (Interview 2023) that on paper, his bosses were formally a standing committee of regional presidents. In practice, however, the head of Tigray's sub-national finance bureau was the most powerful committee member, regularly denouncing the opinions of his Oromo and Amhara colleagues.

Despite Tigray's lingering power, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) was internally divided (Fiseha 2019). After Meles' death, TPLF lacked a charismatic intellectual to bridge its divisions. One such division was generational: the revolutionary old guard returned to power and clashed with younger technocrats (Lefort 2014).[2] Fractured Tigrayan power created

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[2] These elite squabbles were reminiscent of the period before Meles purged his opponents and consolidated power
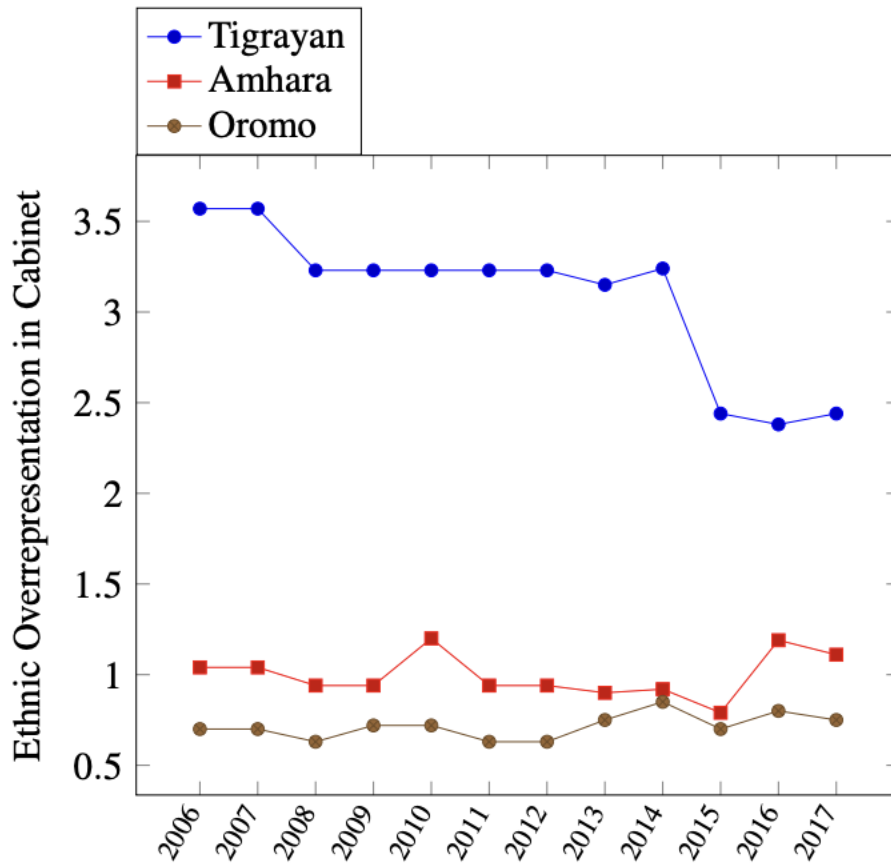
Figure 4.3. Degree of ethnic overrepresentation in Ethiopia's cabinet between 2006-18. Source: Raleigh & Shephard (2020).

opportunities for Oromo and Amhara elites to re-position themselves against Tigray, especially during the 2014-18 protest crisis discussed below.

In addition to Hailemariam's selection and intra-Tigrayan divisions, Hailemariam made several inclusive institutional changes. The first was to create three additional Deputy Prime Minister positions in the national government in 2014 (Lyons & Arriola 2016). To ethnically balance Hailemariam (a southerner), these would be occupied by a Tigrayan, Amhara, and Oromo. The new positions both empowered Hailemariam's ethnic rivals and circumscribed the Prime Minister's Office, Ethiopia's most powerful (Abebe 2016).

Hailemariam's second institutional change was adding 10 additional ministers to the federal cabinet in 2014, a 50% increase. These positions would be filled by ethnic elites outside of Tigray, another inclusive development. For Arriola & Lyons (2016, 75), Hailemariam thus "abandon[ed] the practice of forming lean, technocratic governments, leaning instead toward larger governments inflated with patronage appointments that are made to satisfy specific constituencies."[3] The specific constituencies in question were increasingly non-Tigrayan.

Related to these institutional changes, incumbency rates in the national cabinet and parliament increased under Hailemariam. Compared with Meles' tenure, cabinet and parliamentary incumbency increased by 82% and 130%, respectively (Arriola & Lyons 2016). This suggests that Amhara and Oromo national incumbents were becoming increasingly powerful (Lyons 2019). The intuition here is: As incumbency increases, so too does incumbents' expertise and strength. This creates more powerful incumbent rivals who become harder to purge. Hailemariam was unwilling or unable to create a cabinet of circulating loyalists like Meles before him. Higher incumbency thus shifted the ethnic balance of power away from Tigray.

The aforementioned processes –waning Tigrayan power and institutional changes favor-

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in 2001. Recall that during the Eritrea War, Meles presented a paper in TPLF's Central Committee denouncing his opponents (Milkias 2003). Similarly, after Meles' death, the old guard presented a paper in Central Committee demanding an investigation of the new guard's alleged corruption. The new guard rejected any investigation and the old guard threatened to make its paper public (Lefort 2014).

[3]Hailemariam's actions paralleled former Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa, whose low-caste status compelled him to co-opt detractors into "jumbo cabinets" (Devotta 2010, 121).

ing non-Tigrayans– created indecision and ethnic disagreement in the national government. For Fisseha (2018, 77), the post-Meles period was "the weakest government in Ethiopia's modern history, with indecisiveness and anarchy reminiscent of [historical imperial power struggles]." For Clapham (2018, 1161), this involved a more

> consensual form of rule that is equally far from the normal 'big man' emphasis of Ethiopian governance. In practice, this meant that Hailemariam...concentrated on economic policy, while ceding the initiative on security issues to a security establishment in which Tigrayans continue to play a prominent role (Clapham 2018, 1161).

The national government became increasingly reliant on multiple ethnic groups to make decisions.

Ethnic inclusion disabled national incumbents from responding to the 2014-18 protest crisis with authoritarian repression. Plagued by indecision and ethnic infighting, incumbents initially responded with an erratic mix of repression and inaction. Ultimately, they could only resolve the crisis through democratic concessions, which helped resolve the crisis and appease the protesters.

4.2.1 Decentralization

I begin by noting that after Meles' death, Ethiopia's decentralization was primarily de facto. This is because the constitution –Ethiopia's key de jure source of centralization– did not meaningfully change between 2006-18. Instead, decentralization was driven by assertive sub-national incumbents, who denounced and took actions at odds with the national government.

Centralization continued in several respects after Meles' death. This included the developmental state project, which involved exporting national economic plans to sub-national governments. For example, the national government continued to direct construction of the $4.2 billion Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam in the 2010s (Verhoeven 2021). In 2014, the national government gained access to international bond and capital markets, borrowing $1 billion. Ethiopia continued to demonstrate impressive economic growth, most of which was

directed from the center (Weiss 2016, Hauge & Chang 2019).

However, accompanying Ethiopia's growth were several politico-economic developments that decreased the national government's legitimacy and in turn its power (Lefort 2014). These included high urban poverty, unemployment, and inflation; frequent land-grabbing with unfair compensation rates; and corruption, especially related to the siphoning of development funds (Lyons 2021). The *Ethiopian Reporter* even called on the national government to "clean up its house, [which was] riddled with corruption," an unthinkable occurrence under Meles' premiership (Lefort 2012). Meanwhile, urban development projects –like railways, highways, condominiums– did not benefit Ethiopia's rural majority (Zahorik 2017). As the national government became less legitimate, sub-national incumbents perceived opportunities to denounce it with impunity and to ally with their constituents (O'Donnell & Schmitter 1986, Lyons 2019).

In addition to these economic grievances, Ethiopians directed their ethnic grievances at the national government. The first generation to grow up under autocratic ethnofederalism was especially conscious of its ethno- and sub-national attachments. Amharas saw themselves as disadvantaged *qua* Amharas in the Amhara regional state (Tazebew 2021). Data from the World Value Survey (Inghelart et al. 2020), used by Ishiyama (2021), corroborates this. Between 2007-2020, percentages of Amhara and Oromo male youths who were "proud of their nationality" rose from 29 to 40%, and from 36 to 52%, respectively. Percentages of Amharas and Oromos (all ages) who "did not trust other national groups at all" rose from 20 to 44%, and from 32 to 52%, respectively. High profile conflicts, such as the ethnic cleansing of Amharas in Benishangul-Gumuz regional state, exacerbated these sentiments (Atnafu 2018, Tazebew 2021). Economic and ethnic grievances among sub-national publics influenced (and were influenced by) more assertive sub-national incumbents.

Fiseha (2019, 76) summarizes the preceding themes:

After Meles's death, the collegial central government...permitted regional states to exercise meaningful self-rule and influence decisions at federal level. This [gave] rise to a perception of a weak center and fragmentation of the vanguard

party...Some regional states...declared an "economic revolution" of an ethno-nationalist character... With the center weakening, emboldened...ethnonationalist leaders with competing and often conflicting interests [emerged] as default leaders at the regional state level.

Thus, the national government's weakness and indecisiveness also coincided with an increase in ethno-nationalist sentiment. This led sub-national incumbents to promote agendas that would have been punished under Meles' tenure. Recall that so-called "narrow nationalists" who strayed from the national party line were regularly purged during the 1991-2005 period (Milkias 2003). After Meles' death, however, sub-national incumbents promoted increasingly radical and "autochthonous" agendas, emphasizing the rights of their co-ethnics and wrongs of their non-co-ethnics (Geschiere & Jackson 2006). I discuss developments changes below.

Sub-National Assertiveness

Sub-national incumbents –primarily in Tigray, Amhara, and Oromia– increasingly asserted themselves against the national government between 2012-18 (Interview with former House of Federation member, 2023). This involved demanding decentralization, intruding in national foreign policy debates, denouncing national economic priorities, and more.

Recall from the previous section on inclusion that divisions among national Tigrayan incumbents created a more fractured national government. These divisions also pitted sub-national incumbents against national incumbents, ultimately undermining the latter's power. Increasing sub-national assertiveness, especially in Oromia and Amhara, is crucial to understanding why the 2014-18 mass protests were so challenging.

In Tigray, sub-national incumbents asserted themselves by publicly demanding more decentralization after Meles' death. This was likely a strategy to safeguard Tigray against a potentially unfriendly national government, e.g., if Hailemariam was replaced by a non-Meles loyalist (Fisher & Gebrewahd 2018). By contrast, Tigrayans in the national government saw Meles' death as necessitating greater centralization to prevent disorder (Lyons 2019). This created a new problem for national incumbents to manage.

In addition, sub-national Tigrayan incumbents asserted themselves against national incumbents in foreign policy debates. In 2013, Eritrean president Isaias Afewerki was rumored to be sick. Sub-national Tigrayan incumbents repeatedly pressed the national government to exploit this window of opportunity. By contrast, national Tigrayan incumbents saw calls for war as destabilizing (Lefort 2014).[4]

In Oromia, sub-national incumbents denounced national incumbents for allegedly siphoning Oromia's development revenues (Young 2021).[5] Such denunciation was tied up with the increasing ethno-nationalism in Oromia discussed above. Indeed, it was said that Ethiopia could only prop up its feudal system (and now its developmental state) through the colonization and exploitation of Oromia. Oromo sub-national populists promised to reverse this (Clapham 2018, Gebregziabher 2019). And much as in Tigray, the populists demanded more autonomy, denouncing the national government for betraying the constitution's decentralized spirit (Fiseha 2019).

In addition to denunciation, Oromo sub-national incumbents also took actions that undermined national development priorities. For example, Oromia's parliament passed a law requiring that regional factories only source materials from Oromo youths (Lyons 2019). In addition, Oromo sub-national incumbents rejected the national government's favored nominee for Oromia's regional presidency in 2012 (Lefort 2012). (This was a stark departure from the 1991-2005 period, where sub-national executives were de facto chosen during national EPRDF Central Committee meetings. The twin realities of "democratic centralist" decision-making and sub-national economic dependence meant the center's favored candidates were not rejected (Abebe 2016, Chanie 2007).) In 2016, Oromia president Lemma Megersa asserted the region's constitutional power over taxation and revenue. Surprisingly, the House of Federation ruled in Oromia's favor (Interview with former House of Federation member, 2023).

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[4]This was a reproduction of intra-Tigrayan divisions during the 1998-2000 Eritrea War: sub-national incumbents were more hawkish during the war, while Meles' national, soft-line faction sought reconciliation.

[5]Oromia is Ethiopia's agricultural heartland, producing much of its two largest exports, coffee and the stimulant *ch'at*.

Finally, in Amhara, sub-national incumbents denounced the national government's system of exclusionary Tigrayan rule. (This was in spite of the inclusive changes noted above.) In 2014, Amhara sub-national leaders claimed they had been insufficiently rewarded for supporting Meles during his 2001 purges (Abbink 2017). In 2015, Amhara leaders denounced Tigray's narrative of itself as the key hero in defeating the *Derg* dictatorship. Amharas claimed that in fact, they had given "sanctuary" to a strategically "backpedaling" TPLF, which TPLF denied (Lyons 2021, 154).

Elsewhere in Ethiopia's AEF, sub-national incumbents became more autonomous from the national government. For example, in Ethiopia's Somali regional state, governor Abdi Illey used an extremely repressive police force to create a one-man tyranny (Fisher & Gebrewahd 2018). This police force had been empowered by Meles Zenawi's national government in order to fight terrorists in neighboring Somalia (Abbink & Hagmann 2016). That Abdi could re-purpose the force for political ends evidenced his growing autonomy. Abdi was seen as outside of the national government's control; he even resisted attempts to detain him at an EPRDF meeting (Mohammed 2018b). In another example, Abdi's police forcibly displaced Oromos from Somali region during 2015. Meanwhile, Oromo militias displaced Somalis from Oromia. In response, the national government proposed a motion to prioritize resolving the Somali-Oromia conflict. However, MPs from Somali and Oromia boycotted the motion (Assefa 2019). Finally, in the Southern Nations region, sub-national incumbents rejected the national government's proposed distribution of federal infrastructure funds, leading the House of Federation to review the proposal (Interview with former House of Federation member, 2023).

4.3   Crisis: 2014-18 Mass Protests

This section discusses the 2014-18 protest crisis that prompted national incumbents to make democratic concessions. I argue that decentralization and ethnic inclusion disabled the national government from responding with authoritarian repression. The protests were motivated

by allegations that the national government would annex land in the Oromia and Amhara regions, bringing it under federal jurisdiction and evicting residents. As protests continued, divisions within the more inclusive national government became more pronounced. Meanwhile, sub-national incumbents –those who had benefited from decentralization– became even more assertive.

Protests began in Oromia regional state in 2014 when the so-called "Addis Ababa Master Plan" was leaked (Gebregziabher 2019). The plan allegedly revealed that the national government would "integrate" Addis into Oromia by re-developing Oromo farmland. For specifically Oromo farmers, this was seen as yet another instance of land-grabbing with unfair compensation rates for those evicted. For Oromo constituents and elites more broadly, it was seen as an attempt by national incumbents to annex parts of Oromia and undermine its sub-national autonomy (Zahorik 2017). Meanwhile, Oromo incumbents in the national government were seen as doing little to fight for Oromia, still beholden to Tigray. Farmers and other Oromos began protesting in 2014, especially at Oromia regional universities.

Protests spread to Amhara regional state in 2016 when rumors circulated that Amhara lands would be annexed into Tigray regional state. For Amharas, this evidenced their continued exclusion: the Tigray-led national government was harming Amharas to benefit Tigrayans.[6] The protests accelerated when a retired Amhara military colonel was arrested in July 2016.

In addition to these annexation claims, another key event was the 2015 elections, when EPRDF won 100% of the national parliamentary seats. This was a clear re-calibration by the national government after the 2005 election crisis discussed in chapter 3 (Interview with federal foreign affairs bureaucrat, 2018). The 2015 elections signalled that challenging the government through electoral channels was futile (Arriola & Lyons 2016). This gave protesters an additional sense of urgency in Oromia and Amhara.

The 2014-18 protests seriously challenged the national government for at least two

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[6]Many Amharas believe that during the 1994 constitutional convention, Tigray state borders were drawn in an unfair and ethnically biased way (Nyssen 2023).

reasons. First, the protests involved solidarity and coordination between Ethiopia's largest and historically antagonistic groups, Amharas and Oromos (Pausewang 2005). It is hard to overstate the significance of Amhara protesters chanting "We are all Oromos" and "The blood flowing in Oromia is our blood too" in 2016 (Interview with former federal police chief, 2018). Meanwhile, Oromia's most prominent sub-national incumbents made conciliatory statements to Amharas (Ostebo & Tronvoll 2020).[7] In their cross-ethnic solidarity, the challengers grew larger and more coordinated. And as the crisis grew, sub-national incumbents perceived opportunities to act with increasing assertiveness (Lyons 2018). I show below how sub-national incumbents formed new alliances with protesters and defied the national government.

The protests also challenged the national government's legitimacy because of their ethno-national basis (Opalo & Smith 2021). Recall from chapter 3 that the 2005 election challenge involved protests primarily by *nationalist* challengers, i.e., those who resented the creation of ethnofederal Ethiopia and the politicization of ethno-national identities. These nationalist or "pan-Ethiopian" challengers were dismissed by the national government in 2005 as chauvinists who simply sought to re-establish Amhara supremacy. The 2014-18 protests were different: Oromos and Amharas protested the annexation of their ethnic or national homelands and claimed that their ethno-national interests were unsatisfied. These challenges were harder to dismiss (Interview with former TPLF member, 2018). This is because the national government was led by an ethno-national coalition of parties and it endorsed a federation of ethno-national states. The protests were thus an indictment of the national government as failing on its own terms (Gagliardone et al. 2019).

Given the crisis' seriousness, it was imperative that national incumbents respond decisively and in coordination with sub-national governments. But consistent with my theory,

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[7]The protests' inter-regional nature seemed to undermine a core tenet of ethnofederalism, that it will localize conflict (Roeder 2009). Recall from chapter 2 that ethnofederalism is often proposed in polities with histories of violent central power struggles (Anderson 2012). For architects of ethnofederalism, citizens will hopefully direct their frustrations away from the national government and toward issues like sub-national representation or economic distribution. But between 2014-18, Ethiopia's protesters crossed multiple regions and similarly denounced the national government.

the opposite occurred: 2014-18 was characterized by an erratic mix of repression and inaction. For Verhoeven & Woldemariam (2022, 11), "Amid the crisis, EPRDF Central Committee conclaves...failed to produce a decisive response." I argue below that this response reflected my key independent variables: First, the national government's inclusion of varied ethnic elites meant that leadership could not agree on a coherent response. Second, decentralized autonomy rendered sub-national governments unwilling to cooperate with national directives to end the crisis.

The national government's repressive response involved security sector repression and states of emergency. Repression began as early as 2014, when over 80 Oromo farmer protesters were killed (Abbink 2017). In 2015, Oromo protest fatalities increased to over 400 (ACLED 2022). In 2016, over 800 Amharas were killed (Abbink 2017). Between November 2015 and July 2017, security forces killed over 1,200 civilians were killed during protests (Moody 2017).

Hailemariam's government also declared a state of emergency in October 2016. This increased the military's control over sub-national police. In addition, sub-national incumbents were purged during the emergency (Young 2021). For example, Oromia's President and Vice President of the Supreme Court were both replaced, while its agricultural head was arrested on corruption charges (Yibeltal & Waldyes 2016).

Consistent with my theory, the national government's response was described as

> a package of measures [that] reflects the [national ruling coalition's] shakiness...[and] their acute lack of mutual trust...The ethnic components of the EPRDF had to arrive at an agreement: they knew that they had 'to work together or else to sink together' (Lefort 2016).

An Oromo protest leader (Interview 2023) said he was certain that the state could have crushed them if only Tigrayan incumbents had agreed upon and executed the response. A former federal prosecutor said (Interview 2023) that in 2018, the national government issued a court order to arrest both Abiy Ahmed and Lemma Megersa in 2018. However, Tigrayan security elites were divided over whether to serve it.

As important as the national government's initial repressive response was its inaction. Especially during 2016, the protests swelled to an unmanageable degree (Interview with federal

Table 4.4. The 2014-18 Protest crisis and Incumbent Divisions.

Faction	Ethnicity	Response to Protests	Significance for Liberalization
National incumbents	Tigrayan, Amhara	Blamed sub-national corruption, sought greater centralization	Marginalized during liberalization
Sub-national incumbents	Oromo, Amhara	Allied with protesters, blamed centralization/exclusion	Gained power, liberalized

police chief, 2018; Interview with former bureaucrat in Prime Minister's Office, 2023). For Yusuf (2019, 30, 33)

> In different locations in the Oromia and Amhara regions, security and administrative structures [were] overtaken by protest networks...Where staff remain[ed] intact, structures...lost their tightness. Chains of command [were] broken as civil servants and security personnel change[d] loyalties...massive mobilization against [security forces] as agents of authoritarian repression [gave] them a negative image, causing the erosion of their morale over time.

Fractured chains of command and declining morale magnified problems of national indecision and weakness. National incumbents proposed making economic concessions to protesters, but they were unable to agree on a set of measures (Interview with federal planning and development bureaucrat, 2023).

As the national government both repressed and failed to act, the protests accelerated incumbent divisions (Fisher & Gebrewahd 2018, Young 2021). Key for our purposes, incumbents were divided over the protests' causes as well as how they should be resolved. This division, displayed in Table 4.4, is key to understanding the democratizing measures that followed.

At one end of the division were incumbents who saw the protests as caused by sub-national assertiveness. Their preferred response was re-centralization of power in the national government, which would quell the protests. These centralizers were mostly the old guard, particularly national incumbent Tigrayans (Lefort 2014). They helped uphold PM Meles Zenawi's system and allegedly controlled PM Hailemariam after Meles' death. This first group was mostly outmaneuvered by its rivals and marginalized during liberalization.

At the other end were incumbents who saw the protests as caused by excessive central-

ization and Tigrayan dominance in the national government. Their preferred response was more decentralization and inclusion of "genuine" ethnic representatives in the national government (as opposed to alleged pawns of Tigray). These were mostly sub-national Amhara and Oromo incumbents. As discussed above, after Meles' death, they increasingly defied the national government and appealed to ethno-nationalist sentiment in their regions. Ultimately, this second group emerged victorious from the protest crisis, forcing Hailemariam's resignation and democratizing changes. This second faction is sometimes called the "Oromara" (Oromo + Amhara).

Oromaras defied the national government throughout the protests (Lyons 2019). This began as early as 2014, when sub-national Oromo incumbents were "shaken" by the national government's repression of farmers, which "had a profound impact on them" (Abbink 2017). Oromia's most popular politician –Lemma Megersa– said "I took the oath of office to serve my people, not shadowy elements hiding behind the cover of strict adherence to party dogma" (Oromo Pride 2017). Notice how Lemma affirmed protesters' grievances: Tigrayans' "shadowy" control over national politics (ethnic exclusion) could not continue. Nor could its "dogmas" like democratic centralist decision-making (centralization).

Oromaras also affirmed the protesters' goals, much to the chagrin of its rival faction. For example, Lemma said the national government's Addis Master Plan would never be implemented in Oromia. In response, a senior Tigrayan official said not only that Lemma was wrong, but that anyone who dared oppose the plan would be "mercilessly silenced" (Lyons 2019, 345). Another senior Tigrayan official described parts of the Oromara faction as "radical, anti-people terrorists working on behalf of "narrow nationalists" and external enemies such as Eritrea" (Lyons 2019, 321). This hearkened back to the 1991-2005 period, when sub-national incumbents were labeled "narrow nationalists" if they dared demand more autonomy (Young 2021).

In addition to denouncing it, the Oromara faction also acted to undermine the national government. In Amhara, sub-national incumbents marched with protesters in 2016 (Tazebew 2021). It is also alleged that they permitted ethnic cleansing against Tigrayans in Amhara, a kind of ethno-nationalist "outbidding" by the Amhara incumbents (Lefort 2016, Stewart &

Table 4.5. Indicators of Ethiopia's 2018 Liberalization. Source: Varieties of Democracy (Coppedge et al. 2023).

Indicator	Change from 2017 to 2018	% Increase
Freedom from Torture	-1.28 → .54	142
Media Censorship	-1.42 → -2.06	45
Civil Liberties	.33 → .51	55
Freedom House	12 → 19[a]	58

[a]This was the world's largest single-country change between 2017-18.

MacGauvran 2020). It signaled "We support Amharas more than the national government, so much so that we will help cleanse Amhara lands of outsiders." In both Oromia and Amhara, sub-national incumbents purged colleagues seen as puppets of the national government (Lefort 2016).

4.4 Liberalization

Consistent with the chapter 2 theory, Ethiopian national incumbents responded to the 2014-18 protest crisis with democratic concessions, as summarized in Table 4.5. This section begins with Hailemariam's brief democratizing response to the protests and then discusses his resignation. I then discuss why Hailemariam's replacement –Abiy Ahmed– was selected, moving next to Abiy's democratizing reforms. Finally, I provide evidence for my own explanation that highlights the effects of ethnic inclusion and decentralization on incumbents' incentives. Appendix F provides evidence on how Ethiopian elites received both Abiy's selection and his democratizing reforms. This shows that elites' responses were not uniform, foreshadowing some of the tensions that emerged during Ethiopia's 2019 autocratization.

Hailemariam Desalegn's Resignation

Ethiopia's national government began making democratizing concessions in January 2018, when political prisoners were released. Hailemariam hoped the releases would "foster

national reconciliation" (Kennedy & Peralta 2018). But ultimately, these were insufficient to appease the protesters and their "Oromara" incumbent allies.

In February 2018, Hailemariam resigned as PM. Most explanations implicitly focus on the aforementioned problems of decentralization and ethnic inclusion: Hailemariam was pressured to resign by multiple ethnic forces in both the national and sub-national governments (Fisher & Gebrewahd 2018). On Hailemariam own account, these forces were Tigrayan:

> Since Meles, there has been a fierce power struggle within the party...between those who considered the TPLF to be the dominant party and those in the other three parties which wanted to end this dominance...Many in the TPLF felt that even after Meles, that their experience gave them the exclusive right to rule. Whenever I brought new reforms before the EPRDF, these were always undermined by the TPLF, who felt that they owned the existing order...[democratizing] reforms...had been moving too slowly to save the country from ethnic disintegration...[By resigning,] I made myself part of the solution (Mills 2018).

Others argue that the pressure to resign came from Hailemariam's own Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement colleagues (Interview with federal planning and development bureaucrat, 2023; Lyons 2019) or from the Oromara incumbents (Opalo & Smith 2021). After Hailemariam's resignation, the national government imposed a second State of Emergency.

The ethnic elite infighting that forced out Hailemariam is common during democratization episodes. Haggard and Kaufman (2016, 145) call this process as an "elite displacement transition," noting they are "particularly marked in Africa" (146). After top elites are displaced by their rivals, the latter then "cooperate...with domestic stakeholders in a transitional process" (145). This is largely what happened in Ethiopia: Hailemariam's successors pushed him out through (ethno-national) appeals to their domestic stakeholders, namely the protesters.

Abiy Ahmed's Selection

The Prime Minister's Office remained vacant from February to March 2018 as the protests continued. Meanwhile, national incumbents from four different ethnic groups vied for the post. This competitiveness (and *ex ante* uncertainty over who would be selected) indicated just how indecisive Ethiopia's national government had become.

Oromo incumbents supported Lemma Megersa –arguably the face of "Oromara"– to re-place Hailemariam. Recall that during the protests, Lemma allied with protesters and denounced the national government, demanding more decentralized autonomy and inclusion of "genuine" Oromo representatives. However, as a member of the sub-national Oromia parliament, Lemma was ineligible to be Prime Minister. Only national parliamentarians could be selected.

In March 2018, during an EPRDF Central Committee Meeting marked by ethnic infighting, party leaders submitted nominations (Fiseha 2019). Oromia nominated Abiy Ahmed, a national incumbent and Lemma's closest ally. Significantly, Amhara withdrew its nomination (Demeke Mekonnen) at the last moment and allied with Oromia, further strengthening the Oromara alliance (Fisher and Gebrewahd 2018, Gebregziabher 2019). (Abiy eventually rewarded Amhara leaders for their support, naming Demeke as Deputy PM.)

Abiy received the most votes with 108/171 (63%). SEPDM's (Hailemariam's party) nominee came in second with 58/171. Tigray's nominee, Debretsion Gebremichael received just 2/171. On the one hand, Abiy's 63% may seem high, but he was Ethiopia's first PM selected despite sizable dissent (Fiseha 2019). On the other hand –and insofar as Abiy heralded a new era in Ethiopian politics– his peaceful selection was noteworthy. Indeed, the *Derg* and EPRDF both came to power through violent revolutions or coups.

Abiy was supported by not only his Oromara allies but also some of his rivals in the national government. This was likely because many incumbents –even if they disagreed with Abiy's statements or actions– simply wanted to end the protest crisis. As Temin & Badwaza (2019, 143) put it, Abiy was selected "more out of the EPRDF's urge to preserve itself than out of any desire to embrace liberalization." In this spirit, many incumbents likely selected Abiy because of their recognition that it was an Oromo's "turn" to rule (Opalo & Smith 2021). This was a process of elimination: Dissatisfaction with Hailemariam meant that a southerner could no longer be PM, Tigray was widely denounced by the protesters[8], and Amharas were associated

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[8]As TPLF leader Getachew Reda later recognized, "there's no appetite for a TPLF-dominated government in Addis Ababa again" (Gardner 2020).

with centuries of centralized, exclusionary rule. Out of the EPRDF's four ethno-national parties, only Oromia remained.

Abiy's selection as Ethiopia's first Oromo PM was significant.[9] Indeed, the Haile Selassie, *Derg*, and EPRDF regimes were all led by northern "highlanders" from Amhara or Tigray.[10] Southern peoples (e.g., Oromos, Sidamas, Ethiopian Somalis) see northerners as excluding them.

Abiy's selection was thus itself a concession to Oromos protesters, and one that furthered the inclusive trends discussed above. In addition, it was a concession to Amharas, who detested Hailemariam's furtherance of the Tigrayan-controlled status quo. Abiy regularly appealed to these sentiments, denouncing the the 1991-2018 period as "27 years of darkness" (Fick 2018b).

Despite his ethnic background and populist rhetoric, Abiy was not an outsider. Abiy joined the EPRDF's Oromo wing in 1991 at age 15, one of only 200 Oromos (Wondimu 2018). He learned to speak Tigrinya and ingratiated himself with TPLF. Abiy served for seven years as Director General of Ethiopia's National Intelligence and Security Service, an important and opaque instrument of state repression.[11] The 1991-2018 system relied on loyal sub-national Oromo incumbents like Abiy. These incumbents monitored Ethiopia's largest ethnic group and repressed the opposition Oromo Liberation Front. Observers noted that Abiy befriended former *Derg* officials after becoming PM, hardly the behavior of an outsider.[12]

Abiy's Liberal Reforms

In control of the national government, Abiy and his allies began "dominat[ing] the political agenda in an unprecedented manner" (de Waal 2018, 10). As stated above, PM Hailemariam began the first round of prisoner releases in January 2018. Abiy began the second

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[9]In addition, Abiy is an Evangelist, a minority religion in Oromia. Ethiopia has been historically led by Orthodox Christians.

[10]This is contested by Tigrayans, who see themselves as historically oppressed by Amharas. However, some Tigrayan nobility did settle in southern lands to oversee feudal exploitation. So the southern narrative is not inaccurate (Clapham 1975).

[11]This arguably shaped the repression and unwillingness to compromise that has characterized Abiy's premiership (Interview with former military leader, 2018).

[12]Megawati Sukarnoputri, also initially seen as a populist and democratizer in Indonesia, befriended Suharto-era hawks (Aspinall 2005).

round in July 2018. Thousands were released, including those imprisoned during Meles' 2001 purges, crackdowns following the 2005 election crisis, and the 2014-18 protests. Several high-ranking Amhara military officials were also released from prison. Finally, terrorism charges were dropped against exiled opposition leaders, many of whom returned to Ethiopia.

Another key democratic concession was to legalize three opposition parties in June 2018. All were removed from the national government's list of "terrorist organizations." These were the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), the Somali Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), and Patriotic Ginbot 7 (PG7). This was a significant concession: OLF and ONLF had both waged armed struggles against the Ethiopian government for decades and sought to secede. OLF's leadership returned to Ethiopia from exile and agreed to a ceasefire after meeting with Abiy (Oromo Liberation Front Statement 2018). PG7's legalization was also significant as it was the paramilitary wing of the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD). Recall that CUD was the most successful opposition party during the 2005 election crisis discussed in chapter 3. The national government thus legalized its most electorally viable and historically violent challengers.

Liberalizing reforms also reached the security apparatus. Ethiopia's Anti-Terrorism Proclamation, which police had used to repress dissenters, was re-written and many arbitrary provisions were removed. At least three dozen military officials –particularly those from Tigray– stood trial for human rights abuses in late 2018. Several were fired, demobilized, or imprisoned. To take two key examples, Abiy replaced Ethiopia's National Army Chief and Intelligence Chief, both Tigrayans. These security sector changes were consequential, allegedly motivating Eritrean president Isaias Afewerki to reconcile with Ethiopia (Fisher & Gebrewahd 2018).[13]

Security sector changes also occurred outside of Tigray. 160 generals and commanders were fired or decommissioned in Amhara in 2018 (ACLED 2022). In Ethiopia's Somali state, the tyrannical regional president Abdi Illey was removed. Finally, several prisons known for torturing dissidents were closed.

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[13]This is because Isaias and the TPLF had an antagonistic relationship (Young 1996). After hearing that his antagonists were removed, Isaias became receptive to reconciling.

News media were also liberalized during 2018. Hundreds of news organizations were legalized, many imprisoned journalists were released, and opposition leaders were appointed to the state-owned media corporation. Two large opposition media networks were permitted to re-open Ethiopian offices in May 2018. One of these represented Oromo ethno-nationalism while the other represented Ethiopian nationalism, an influential ideology among many multi-ethnic urbanites and Amharas.

Finally, Abiy's government appointed an opposition leader –Birtukan Mideksa– to head its election administration body. Birtukan had been imprisoned several times, notably after the 2005 election crisis discussed in chapter 3. She was a leader of the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD), the most successful challenger that won many seats but was later repressed and exiled.

Alternative Explanations

Most explanations of Ethiopia's 2018 liberalization are not mutually exclusive with my own (Zaks 2017). Indeed, observers have correctly highlighted the following factors as motivating democratic concessions: protesters' demands, the national government's weakness, incumbent and opposition elite demands, and specifically Oromara incumbents' attempts to sideline Tigrayans. For our purposes, these explanations are correct but incomplete. My account, which posits two general independent variables, helps explain *variation* across regime change episodes. In other words, by explaining liberalization *and* autocratization outcomes using the same theory, I do not mistakenly highlight factors that were present in both. This is crucial when analyzing countries –like Ethiopia– with many historical particularities.

Several accounts causally connect the 2014-18 protests with democratization, showing that these were sufficiently challenging so as to force the national government to reform (Lyons 2019, Young 2021, Fiseha 2019). What these accounts leave unanswered is why national incumbents could be forced to do anything. Indeed, the 2005 protesters discussed in chapter 3 could not force democratization. There the national government ultimately responded with

repression and autocratization. My account is more complete in accounting for this variation. I argue that national incumbents were motivated to reform because by 2018 (a) they were plagued by ethnic indecision and (b) their authority was undermined by strong sub-national governments. Neither of these factors were present in 2005.

Other accounts highlight Oromara incumbents' desires to sideline Tigrayans (Fisher & Gebrewahd 2019, Gebregziabher 2019). For example, perhaps Abiy's national government implemented security reforms in order to arrest and imprison specifically Tigrayan elites. Given Tigrayans' key role in the security sector between 1991-2018, this is plausible (Tadesse & Young 2003). However, these accounts must explain why Tigrayan incumbents were in a position in 2018 to be sidelined in the first place. Indeed, the 1991-2005 system discussed in chapter 3 was one where little could be done to sideline Tigrayans. This chapter proposed two factors to explain changes in Tigray's weakening status: growing inclusion of non-Tigrayans in the national government, and growing de facto decentralization to sub-national governments that were hostile to Tigrayan rule.

Effects of Decentralization and Inclusion on National Incumbents' Incentives

The main evidence that ethnic inclusion and decentralization affected national incumbents' response to the protests comes from prior sections of this chapter. Consider the following claims that I defended:

First, during the protest crisis, Ethiopian national incumbents could not effectively respond because of decentralization and inclusion. Growing inclusion produced inter-ethnic disagreement (over the proper response to protests) and ultimately paralysis. Meanwhile, growing decentralization had produced more assertive sub-national incumbents, who refused to cooperate with the national government in its response.

Second, PM Hailemariam Desalegn's resignation and initial liberalizing reform were marked by problems of inclusion and decentralization. Diverse national incumbents (Tigrayans, Oromos, Amharas, southerners) as well as assertive sub-national incumbents all pressured

Hailemariam to resign. And on his own account, Hailemariam began releasing political prisoners (liberalizing) in spite of disagreements with national Tigrayans.

Finally, PM Abiy Ahmed's selection was also marked by inclusion and decentralization problems. He was selected amidst levels of ethnic disagreement not seen in recent Ethiopian history. And his selection served as a concession to both national and sub-national incumbents who had impeded a coherent response to the protests.

In light of this evidence, it would be surprising if Abiy's liberalizing reforms were not also marked by problems of decentralization and inclusion. This is not a sufficient defense of my own theory but rather a consideration that should affect how much evidence we demand (Fairfield & Charman 2017).

4.5   Conclusion

This chapter provided a second case study to corroborate the chapter 2 theory of regime change under autocratic ethnofederalism (AE). Chapter 2 suggested that in decentralized, inclusive AEFs that face crises, incumbents respond with democratic concessions. However, this did not establish that the theorized sequence was borne out in actual case study sequences. This chapter attempted to provide detailed evidence for each part of the theory.

I first showed that Ethiopia became increasingly decentralized and inclusive during the 2012-18 period. Consistent with my theoretical expectations, this rendered the national government weaker and more ethnically fractured. This disabled national incumbents from resolving crises through authoritarian repression. The 2012 death of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi was discussed as a key decentralizing, inclusive event. Meles' replacement –Hailemariam Desalegn– was a non-Tigrayan. And sub-national incumbents became more assertive, due partly to national-level fracturing and indecision.

I then showed that the 2014-18 mass protests seriously challenged Ethiopia's national government. Protesters denounced the system of centralized, Tigrayan rule, while incumbents

sided with the protesters. Ultimately, the government could not coherently respond to this crisis, alternating between repression and inaction. This further emboldened the protesters. The crisis may have motivated Ethiopian national incumbents to autocratize, but it was simply too decentralized and inclusive to do so.

The third section showed that the national government made democratic concessions. As protests grew, Hailemariam's national government began releasing political prisoners. After Hailemariam resigned, his replacement –Abiy Ahmed– made additional concessions, legalizing opposition parties and improving press freedom. I argued that decentralization and inclusion tied the national government's hands; this prompted it to make democratic concessions to resolve the crisis.

Chapter 5 provides a third case study to corroborate the chapter 2 theory, explaining Ethiopia's 2019 autocratization. I show that after 2018, the national government took steps to re-centralize power and exclude key Tigrayan and Oromo elites from power. This created a stronger and more decisive national government, one that could effectively resolve crises by autocratizing. And this is precisely what happened: after an attempted regional coup and two mass protests, the national government autocratized.

4.6   Appendix F: Elite Responses to Liberalization

This appendix provides evidence of the variety of Ethiopian elite responses to (1) Abiy Ahmed's selection as Prime Minister and (2) liberalizing changes by Abiy's national government. Many elites supported both Abiy's selection and the democratizing reforms. However, they tended to differ in their expectations of how these changes would affect them, their group, and Ethiopia as a whole. Understanding this variation helps us understand the elite divisions that formed in the lead-up to Ethiopia's 2019 autocratization, which I analyze in chapter 5.

For at least the first six months of his premiership, Abiy was widely praised. An Ethiopian academic wrote Abiy's "truly heroic act carried us through the storm, and the spirit of hope

that they helped rekindle has the ability to weather another political storm" (Mekonnen 2018).

His selection commenced a period of "Abiy-mania," as Ethiopians "talked quite openly about seeing him as the son of God or a prophet" (Lyons 2019, 344).[14] An Oromo activist who nominated Abiy for the Nobel Peace Prize (which he won in 2019), said Abiy "reconfigured the Ethiopian political landscape...widening the political space and narrowing the social divisions and antagonism within the country" (Allo 2018b); he even worried that Abiy was "moving too fast in a country without the institutional safeguards to implement these policies" (Foarde 2018). Multiple Oromo opposition leaders recounted their fears that Abiy was liberalizing too rapidly (Interviews 2023). Abiy's potential shortcomings were glossed over and blamed on others: one opposition Oromo elite condemned "TPLF, which used to be the real ruling party [for] resisting [change]...This is not a small resistance, it can cost the country as a whole" (Fantahun 2019a).

Liberalizing reforms were also initially met with optimism. The Oromo opposition elite Jawar Mohammed, who returned from exile, said "liberalization of the political sphere...has resuscitated hope to the possibility of democratic transition" (Mohammed 2018). An Ethiopian nationalist opposition elite said "Ethiopia has shown a magnificent trajectory out of thugtatorship into multiparty democracy, rule of law and expansion of civil liberties" (Mariam 2020). By contrast, others were more pessimistic about the reforms' scope. An Oromo Liberation Front statement said

> EPRDF has pulled another one of its deceptive practices by pretending to imple-
> ment reforms...leaders are simply assigned to higher posts by reshuffling...this
> is not a step that brings the desired change, but rather it is a machination that is
> designed to extend the stay on the power of EPRDF...[EPRDF talks] on stages
> about peacefully resolving the political problems through dialogue...as if they are
> not governing the country with a barrel of a gun (Oromo Liberation Front 2018).

To take two examples in more depth, the legalization of the opposition Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) divided elites. OLF's chairman returned to Ethiopia from exile in 2018 and declared on Facebook "The war between OLF and Ethiopian government for many years has been stopped"

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[14]This was noteworthy, as EPRDF had attempted not to build a personality cult around Meles Zenawi, unlike the *Derg*'s Mengistu or feudal emperors (Young 2021).

(Ibsa 2018). But OLF's determination to "liberate" Oromos living in Amhara and elsewhere is controversial.[15] An Amhara opposition elite said "No comment has been heard...about the rare official coming into Ethiopia...who was leader of OLF...when thousands of innocent Amhara were brutally massacred" (Molla 2018a). Riots ensued when OLF returned to Addis in September 2018, leading to 58 deaths and hundreds of displacements.[16] After OLF's legalization, Amhara regional police repeatedly committed violence against suspected OLF members (Yusuf 2019).

Security reforms (e.g., imprisoning officials for human rights abuses) also divided Ethioipan elites. In Tigray, one senior TPLF official decried these as "efforts to corner the people of Tigray" more generally (Fick 2018a).[17] Another Tigrayan leader echoed this theme of collective punishment, saying "Failure to differentiate between a people and a ruling class could have dire consequences" (Fantahun 2018a).[18] Security reforms were also controversial in Amhara, being denounced as producing disorder.[19] Amharas worried about being vulnerable to Oromo mobs, who were allegedly exploiting security reforms as opportunities to attack with impunity.[20] Other Amhara elites saw reforms as not doing enough to dislodge Tigrayan elites from power, with one Amhara General calling them "a lie" (Addis Fortune 2019).

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[15]Some Ethiopianist and Amhara elites believe TPLF and OLF are their two greatest enemies. One said on Facebook "the [ethnofederal] constitution drafted by the TPLF and OLF, which has plunged our country into all this genocide and chaos, should be banned" (Balderas 2020).

[16]By contrast, one Ethiopianist opposition leader empathized with OLF's victimization by Ethiopia's national government, congratulating OLF on its legalization (ETHZema 2019).

[17]This kind of anti-Tigrayan sentiment had parallels in Ethiopian history: *Derg* leader Mengistu once said that there was "no way of separating the bandits [TPLF] from the Tigrayan people" (Abbay 2004, 607). Some Ethiopians still pejoratively refer to Tigrayans as bandits or hyenas.

[18]This was not a unanimous view among Tigrayans. For example, one Tigrayan opposition leader said that TPLF's accusations of general, anti-Tigrayan targeting was simply an attempts to increase TPLF's bargaining power vis-a-vis the central government (Desta 2019). Another said"There's resentment toward [Tigrayans] when other Ethiopians hear of rallies in Tigray supporting the TPLF because that seems like [Tigrayans] aren't supporting reform efforts. But that doesn't lead to them being targeted" (Ezega 2019a).

[19]Brooks (2020) and Smith (2015) analyze South Africans' opposition to security reforms on similar grounds, hence their book titles *This Democracy is Killing Us* and *Rejecting Rights*, respectively.

[20]One Amhara opposition leader said "When the State is no longer in shape to maintain law and order and [is] descending into the war of all against all...It is therefore quit[e] unnatural for the existentially threatened to disarm, rather the contrary!" (Molla 2018b).

Chapter 5

Ethiopia 2019's Autocratization

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a third case study of regime change in Ethiopia's autocratic ethnofederation (AE). I explain Ethiopia's 2019[1] autocratization episode using the chapter 2 theory. The theory posits that different combinations of centralization and ethnic exclusion affect how national incumbents respond to serious crises.

In AEFs that are centralized and exclusive, I hypothesized that national incumbents are strong (vis-a-vis sub-national governments) and ethnically unified enough to respond to crises with authoritarian repression. By contrast, in AEFs that are decentralized and inclusive, I hypothesized national incumbents are too weak and ethnically fractured to resolve the crisis with repression. As the crisis drags on without a resolution, incumbents may need to make democratic concessions.

After 2018, Ethiopian national incumbents re-centralized power and excluded ethnic minorities from federal power. The chapter 2 theory helps explain why national incumbents responded to multiple crises with authoritarian repression. I thus provide further evidence in support of the hypothesis that centralization and exclusion enable authoritarian backlash. My argument is diagrammed in Figure 5.1.

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[1]Autocratizing changes occurred during and after 2018. However, the most significant changes occurred between 2019-20. For simplicity, I refer to the outcome date as 2019.
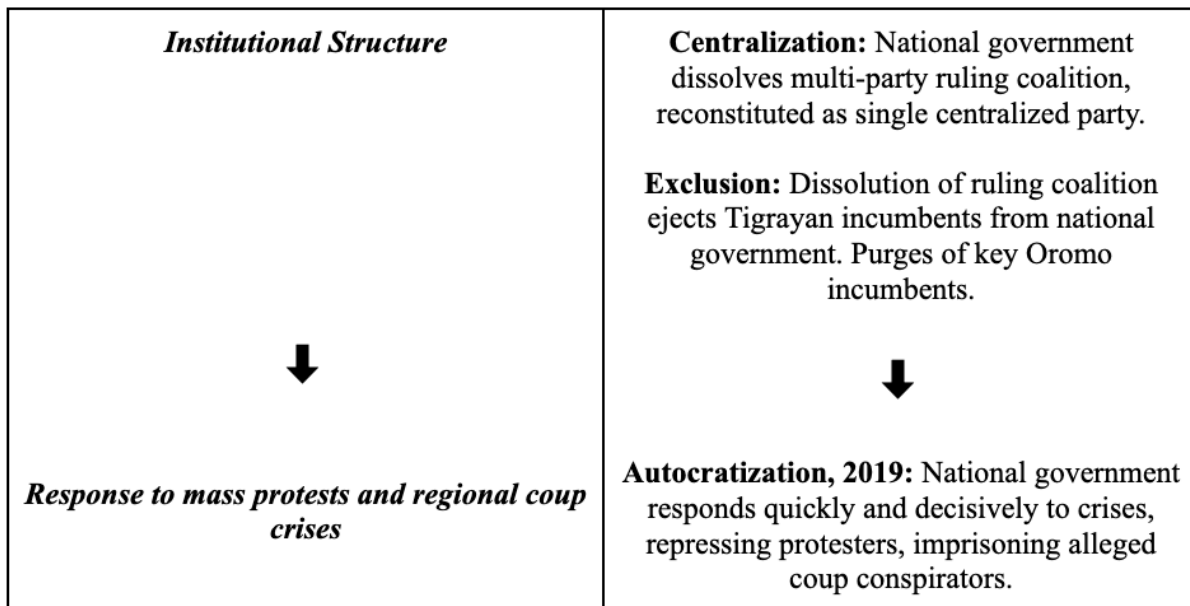
Institutional Structure	Centralization: National government dissolves multi-party ruling coalition, reconstituted as single centralized party.
	Exclusion: Dissolution of ruling coalition ejects Tigrayan incumbents from national government. Purges of key Oromo incumbents.
⬇	⬇
Response to mass protests and regional coup crises	Autocratization, 2019: National government responds quickly and decisively to crises, repressing protesters, imprisoning alleged coup conspirators.

Figure 5.1. Ethiopia's 2019 Autocratization Sequence. Re-centralization and ethnic exclusion enabled national incumbents to respond to crises with authoritarian repression.

This chapter proceeds as follows. In section 5.2, I show that Ethiopia's AEF became more centralized and exclusive after 2018. These processes enabled national incumbents to respond to crises with authoritarian repression. For example, new sources of foreign support (e.g., from Eritrea, Israel, and the U.S.) enriched the national government and strengthened its security institutions vis-a-vis sub-national governments. As re-centralization occurred, sub-national incumbents became weaker and could not exploit each crisis by denouncing or undermining the national government. Meanwhile, Ethiopia's national government became more ethnically exclusive after 2018. This was largely because the national ruling coalition was dissolved and reconstituted as a national ruling party, which Tigrayan national incumbents opted not to join. In addition, several powerful Oromo incumbents were purged. In turn, the national government became less paralyzed by inter-ethnic indecision. It responded to each crisis quickly and decisively; no crisis lasted over five days. My evidence for this section comes from original interview data, news and social media data, and secondary literature.

Then, in section 5.3 I show that Ethiopian national incumbents faced three serious crises

between 2019-20, an attempted sub-national coup in Amhara and two mass protests in Oromia. These crises motivated national incumbents to autocratize. Finally, in section 5.4 I show that Ethiopia autocratized in 2019. The national government responded to each of the three crises by imprisoning protesters and journalists, targeting opposition political parties, and censoring news media. I argue that re-centralization and exclusion enabled this response. My evidence for this section comes from original interview data, disaggregated democracy data, news and social media data, and secondary literature.

In the Postscript, I analyze the Tigray War (2020-22) and a key crisis –Tigray's 2020 sub-national elections– that motivated it. I discuss the Tigray War for two reasons. First, it was one of the 21st century's deadliest wars, with recent casualty figures over 600,000 (Ibreck & de Waal 2022). Second, the chapter 2 theory may help explain the Tigray War. Briefly, re-centralization and ethnic exclusion disadvantaged Tigrayan incumbents during the post-2018 period. For example, the national government strengthened itself by reconciling with Eritrea in 2018; this was an agreement with Tigray's nemesis (Isaias Afewerki) from which Tigrayan elites were excluded. Tigray challenged the national government in September 2020 by holding sub-national elections, defying national orders to postpone them due to COVID-19. This led to a crisis. As relations between national incumbents and Tigrayan elites became more hostile, warfare erupted. Consistent with my theoretical sequence, the national government responded to Tigray's challenge with further autocratization: ethnic Tigrayans were repressed and detained en masse, journalists were imprisoned and news media censored, and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) opposition party was targeted. My evidence for this section comes from original interview data, social and news media, and secondary literature.

Table 5.1 displays three actors who were crucial to generating Ethiopia's 2019 autocratization. Figure 5.2 displays the time period under consideration.

Before proceeding, I discuss two potential difficulties confronting this chapter as well as some potential solutions thereto. These stem from the time period under consideration: this chapter operates in a temporally "cramped" space, analyzing three crises in just four years. By
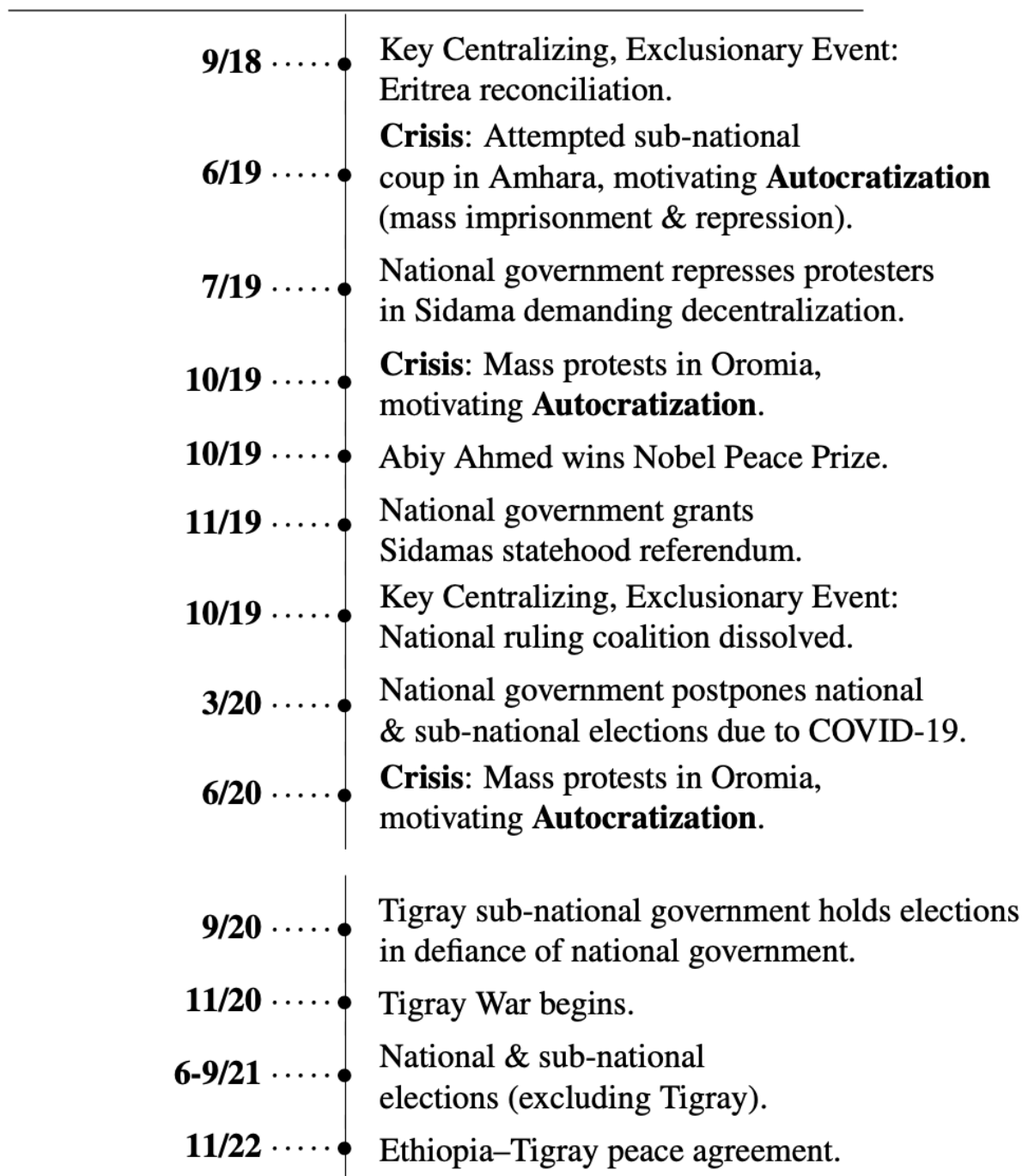
9/18 ····· •	Key Centralizing, Exclusionary Event: Eritrea reconciliation.
6/19 ····· •	**Crisis**: Attempted sub-national coup in Amhara, motivating **Autocratization** (mass imprisonment & repression).
7/19 ····· •	National government represses protesters in Sidama demanding decentralization.
10/19 ····· •	**Crisis**: Mass protests in Oromia, motivating **Autocratization**.
10/19 ····· •	Abiy Ahmed wins Nobel Peace Prize.
11/19 ····· •	National government grants Sidamas statehood referendum.
10/19 ····· •	Key Centralizing, Exclusionary Event: National ruling coalition dissolved.
3/20 ····· •	National government postpones national & sub-national elections due to COVID-19.
6/20 ····· •	**Crisis**: Mass protests in Oromia, motivating **Autocratization**.
9/20 ····· •	Tigray sub-national government holds elections in defiance of national government.
11/20 ····· •	Tigray War begins.
6-9/21 ····· •	National & sub-national elections (excluding Tigray).
11/22 ····· •	Ethiopia–Tigray peace agreement.

Figure 5.2. Ethiopia's Autocratization Timeline, 2018-22.

Table 5.1. Key Political Groups in Ethnofederal Ethiopia, 2018-2022.

Actor	Significance for 2019 Autocratization
Tigrayan incumbents/opposition	Disadvantaged by centralization and exclusion, joined opposition after ruling coalition was dissolved, challenged national incumbents by holding "illegal" sub-national elections, repressed during Tigray War
Amhara and Oromo incumbents	Strengthened by centralization and exclusion, challenged by Oromo protests and Amhara coup, oversaw autocratization and Tigray War
Amhara and Oromo opposition	Orchestrated multiple crises, repressed as part of autocratization and during Tigray War

contrast, chapter 3 analyzed one crisis over 14 years.

A first difficulty concerns reverse causation: I claim that centralization and ethnic exclusion enabled national incumbents to autocratize. But perhaps the converse is true. For example, we can imagine authoritarian repression serving to exclude ethnic minorities from the state and strengthen the federal government (Gelman & Imbens 2013).

Ultimately, a careful analysis of Ethiopia's timeline after 2018 can help circumvent this reverse causation difficulty. Consider my claim that foreign financial support helped Ethiopian national incumbents re-centralize power. Major investments by U.A.E. occurred in June 2018, which enriched the national government vis-a-vis sub-national governments. However, this was a full year before the 2019 Amhara regional coup crisis, to which national incumbents responded by autocratizing. In cases like this, it is unclear how outcomes could cause such antecedent events.

A second difficulty concerns simultaneous causation: I claim that centralization and ethnic exclusion affected national incumbents' opportunities to autocratize. But perhaps autocratization itself prompted further centralization and ethnic exclusion. For example, the 2019 Amhara regional coup crisis was caused partly by its perpetrator's perceptions of ethnic exclusion. National incumbents responded to the crisis with authoritarian repression. And perhaps these autocratizing measures motivated national incumbents to dissolve the ruling coalition, an

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exclusionary action. To schematize this: exclusion → crisis → autocratization → exclusion.

This chapter may in fact analyze simultaneous causal processes. And these processes may be an inescapable part of case study research.[2] However, one response to this difficulty is to treat each autocratization response as the termination of a discrete case. In other words, because I analyze three crises and three autocratizations that followed, this chapter may be seen as providing three case studies that confirm the chapter 2 theory.

Ultimately, I do not structure this chapter as three discrete cases because of my reliance on the Varieties of Democracy data set. V-Dem does not release multiple Ethiopia democracy scores for 2019, when two of the crises took place. And the difference between Ethiopia's 2019 and 2020 electoral democracy scores is a modest .011. To claim that this chapter offers three confirming cases may strike some readers as misleading.

Even if this chapter's short timeline presents difficulties, it can serve the useful function of circumscribing or offering "scope conditions" for the chapter 2 theory (Faletti & Lynch 2009). One such condition is temporal: the chapter 2 theory may have more explanatory power when the outcome in question follows medium-length processes, as in chapters 3-4. This scope condition directs us to temper our confidence in –as opposed to abandon– the dissertation's central claim, that centralization and ethnic exclusion are key dynamics in understanding AEF regime changes.

5.2 Centralization and Ethnic Exclusion

This section shows that Ethiopia's autocratic ethnofederation became more centralized and exclusive after 2018. These changes strengthened the national government and rendered it more ethnically unified and decisive. Consistent with my theoretical expectations, these processes enabled national incumbents to respond to serious crises with authoritarian repression. By contrast, national incumbents were under greater pressure to respond to the 2014-18 protest crisis with democratic concessions, owing to progressive decentralization and inclusion. In other

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[2]As Morgan (2016, 490) reminds us, in case studies "endogeneity is not a problem to be solved, but a basic feature of the world around us that should be explored through careful evaluation of how events unfold over time."

words, the factors that had "blocked" autocratization before 2018 were removed thereafter. I begin with two key centralizing, exclusionary events, displayed in Table 5.2. I then discuss some more general factors.

Before discussing centralization and exclusion, I briefly note some "counter-trends" or continuities with the pre-2018 period. First, recall from chapter 4 that sub-national incumbents increasingly asserted themselves against the national government, denouncing and undermining national directives. Such assertiveness –especially during the 2014-18 protest crisis– brought Abiy to power. And it did not simply stop after Abiy's selection as PM (Interview with House of Federation member, 2023). As I show below, sub-national incumbents –especially in Tigray and also in Oromia– continued to denounce the national government for its re-centralization and exclusion (Lyons 2021).

A second continuity was that sub-national incumbents in Tigray, Oromia, and Amhara campaigned on ethno-nationalist platforms. Recall from chapter 4 that these incumbents appealed to prioritize the rights of their co-ethnics and undermine those of ethnic "outsiders." Again, this was because decentralization empowered them to mobilize without fear of central reprisal. Sub-national incumbents benefited from ethno-nationalist mobilization by increasing their constituents' hostility toward the national government; the latter was seen as doing too little to advance ethno-national interests. Once again, this did not simply subside after Abiy's selection (Ishiyama 2021). Each crisis discussed below was initiated or accelerated by Amhara and Oromo ethno-nationalists.

Finally, ethnic inclusion continued after 2018. Recall that PM Hailemariam Desalegn's inclusive national government was unable to respond to the 2014-18 protest crisis. It was simply too indecisive and beset by ethnic disagreement among Tigryan, Amhara, Oromo, and southerner incumbents. And similarly, after Abiy's selection to PM in 2018, the "Oromara" alliance that brought him to power remained beset by disagreement (Lyons 2021). For example, Amhara incumbents advocated after 2018 to annex part of Tigray, which Oromo incumbents saw as destabilizing (Berhe & Gebreselassie 2021). Oromos and Amharas also clashed over whether the

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Table 5.2. Two Centralizing and Exclusionary Events.

Event	Source of Centralization	Source of Exclusion
Eritrea Reconciliation	National government allies with Eritrea against Tigray sub-national government	Oromo and Amhara national incumbents ally against Tigrayans
National Ruling Coalition dissolved	Sub-national ruling parties dissolved, become branches of national party	Tigray ruling party doesn't join, becomes opposition party at national level

Oromia sub-national government was entitled to more jurisdiction over the capital Addis Ababa, as is guaranteed in the 1994 constitution (Fiseha 2021). Despite these important "counter-trends," re-centralization and ethnic exclusion represented a major departure from the 2012-18 period.

5.2.1   Two Centralizing, Exclusionary Events

This subsection discusses two key events that furthered centralization and ethnic exclusion. These events mostly strengthened the national government vis-a-vis sub-national governments and reduced the power of ethnic Tigrayans. This enabled national incumbents to respond to crises with authoritarian repression.

Reconciliation with Eritrea

Ethiopia's reconciliation with Eritrea furthered centralization by affording national incumbents military and financial support in their conflict with Tigrayan sub-national incumbents. It furthered exclusion because Tigrayan incumbents played no role in reconciliation.

Ethio-Eritrea relations had been poor since Ethiopia won the 1998-2000 war, which chapter 3 discussed as a key centralizing, exclusionary event. This was because of mutual contempt between Eritrean President Isaias Afewerki and Tigrayan national and sub-national incumbents. However, Abiy's selection to PM as an Oromo in 2018 undermined Tigray's national power. In addition, Abiy purged key Tigrayan economic and military elites. This allegedly convinced Isaias to meet with Abiy in June 2018, where the two reconciled a number

of disagreements (Fisher and Gebrehwad 2019). (Reconciliation was discussed by Ethiopia's national government before Abiy's selection largely for economic reasons, e.g., the costliness of Ethiopia being unable to access Eritrean ports (Vilmer 2021).)

Reconciliation involved opening the border between Tigray and Eritrea as well as a planned expansion of economic activities. Abiy and Isaias garnered international and domestic praise as families were seen reuniting. Reconciliation also strengthened Abiy's relationships with UAE and Saudi Arabia, who brokered the reconciliation. (As I discuss below, the UAE also financially supported Abiy's re-centralization efforts. The Emirati Crown Prince deposited $1 billion USD in Ethiopia's central bank in June 2018 and promised a further $2 billion in investment.) Abiy was awarded the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize for these efforts. However, the border was soon closed, economic activity between both countries stagnated, and Ethiopia did not regain access to Eritrea's ports.

Reconciliation was a centralizing event not merely because it afforded Ethiopia's national government additional foreign support, but because Eritrea worked to weaken one sub-national government in particular (Tigray). Unsurprisingly, the incumbent Tigray People's Liberation Front denounced reconciliation.[3] Some Oromo elites initially supported reconciliation[4] before coming to see it as part of the national government's re-centralization agenda (Interview with Oromo opposition leader, 2023). Tigrayan and Oromo skepticism toward reconciliation stemmed partly from Eritrean president Isaias Afewerki's past criticism of decentralization and ethnofederalism (Temare 2020). And indeed, Isaias admitted advising Abiy to undermine sub-national autonomy. Isaias said "We don't want to fully interfere in deciphering the poisons of ethnic federalism. That is their internal issue. However, we won't be silent [as] it victimizes Eritrea and that is why we are working together with Abiy Ahmed" (Temare 2020).

Reconciliation was not only a centralizing but an exclusionary event. This is because

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[3]A TPLF statement said it "will not take part in any process that harms the interests of the people of Tigray, [demanding] additional concessions from Eritrea" (Maasho 2018a).

[4]One Oromo leader said "Ethiopia's change of heart towards Eritrea is genuine...directly tied to the momentous [democratizing] changes taking place domestically" (Al Jazeera 2018).

Abiy and Isaias reconciled without any Tigrayan incumbents present (Vilmer 2021). The latter had no way to ensure their position vis-a-vis Eritrea was not weakened. Reconciliation helped Abiy appease the Ethiopian nationalist and Amhara ethno-nationalist members of his inner circle. These groups resented Ethiopia's "loss" of Eritrea, which seceded in 1991. Their leaders sometimes expressed a desire to re-integrate Eritrea into a "greater Ethiopia," particularly after the 2005 election crisis (Milkias 2003, Lefort 2007).

Reconciliation with Eritrea not only furthered centralization and exclusion but also paved the way for Ethiopia's 2020-22 Tigray War (Vilmer 2021). Along with purges of Tigrayan incumbents in 2018, reconciliation signaled to Tigray that Abiy's interests diverged from their own. Indeed, by reconciling with a hostile foreign country, TPLF's former underlings like Abiy[5] were acting not only independently of but also antagonistically toward Tigray. The 2020-22 Tigray War made clear the purpose of reconciliation: to form an Ethio-Eritrea security alliance against Tigray, Eritrean president Isaias Afewerki's historic nemesis (Young 1996, Tronvoll 2022).

Dissolution of National Ruling Coalition

The dissolution of Ethiopia's national ruling coalition was arguably the most important event in its centralizing, exclusive trajectory after 2018. The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) EPRDF was re-constituted as one party, the Prosperity Party. Dissolution meant that sub-national governments –the parties of which formerly constituted EPRDF– became mere branches of a single party. In addition, the incumbent Tigray People's Liberation Front did not join Prosperity Party, thus excluding Tigrayans from national power.

Abiy and his allies dissolved EPRDF in December 2019 (Lyons 2021). EPRDF had defeated the *Derg* dictatorship in 1991, played the key role in Ethiopia's transitional government (1991-94) and constitutional convention, and then dominated Ethiopian national and sub-national politics through 2019. EPRDF had for 28 years served as Ethiopia's main "consociational"

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[5]Recall from chapter 4 that Abiy joined TPLF's Oromo Front at age 15 and later managed the repressive Oromia state under TPLF's guidance (Lyons 2019).

institution, through which sub-national incumbents vied for national power (Lijphart 2004, Adeney 2009).

EPRDF was re-constituted as a single ruling party, the Prosperity Party.[6] For example, the Oromo Democratic Party was dissolved and reconstituted as the Oromia Prosperity Party. Ethiopia was thus no longer ruled by a coalition of sub-nationally defined parties. Instead, it was ruled by one national party with sub-national branches. According to one of Abiy's former allies, Abiy had been planning to dissolve EPRDF since his selection in 2018 (Interview with Oromo opposition leader, 2023).

The Oromo, Amhara, and Southern members of EPRDF joined Prosperity Party, as did the Afar, Somali and Sidama regional parties. These latter joiners were significant, paving the way for greater inclusion and self-rule (Interview with sub-national executive, 2023).[7] This is because, between 1991-2019, sub-national governments outside of Oromia, Amhara, Tigray, and the south were ruled by "satellite" parties. The satellites were formally outside of and subservient to EPRDF (Markakis 2011).

Most important for our purposes, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) –which created EPRDF– refused to dissolve itself and join Prosperity Party (Opalo & Smith 2021). Tigrayan incumbents denounced the dissolution as an unconstitutional, re-centralizing move (Lyons 2021). A TPLF official said "Prosperity Party is false, made up of liars...without clear vision...[and] going forward blindly...It is illegitimate for the government...to be converted into another party after it assumed power in the name of EPRDF" (Ezega 2019c). Later, TPLF's president said "The promising political change has gone off track and lead...the country to *unitary* government" (Ezega 2020, emphasis added).

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[6]Former PM Meles Zenawi had considered re-constituting EPRDF along economic as opposed to ethnic lines in the 2000s (Young 2021, Opalo & Smith 2021). Meles saw this as better cohering with Ethiopia's developmental state model (Vaughan and Tronvoll 2003). In addition, the upsurge of Ethiopian nationalism during the 1998-2000 Ethio-Eritrean War made clear that EPRDF's ethno-nationalism was unattractive to much of the citizenry in Amhara and in urban centers.

[7]This is not to say that these former "satellite" regions were not concerned about Prosperity Party's centralized character. Many satellite leaders seemingly joined because the alternatives were worse (Interview with sub-national executive, 2023).

Dissolution was a centralizing event because sub-national parties became mere branches of the national party (Interview with federal planning and development bureaucrat, 2023; Fiseha 2021). For example, Prosperity Party branches cannot formally opt to leave the party, whereas EPRDF parties could leave the coalition. A sub-national executive (Interview 2023) said that after EPRDF's dissolution, Oromia was in a much weaker and less autonomous position, ruled mainly by loyalists of PM Abiy. According to a federal planning and development bureaucrat (Interview 2023), after dissolution, sub-national governments lost their agenda-setting powers. Meanwhile, many inexperienced sub-national cadres were promoted. A former federal prosecutor (Interview 2023) said that under Prosperity Party governance, his office experienced more interference in investigations and prosecutions as well as more internal shuffling.

Dissolution was not only a centralizing event but an exclusionary event. Indeed, Tigrayan incumbents' refusal to join Prosperity Party created a national government more dominated by Oromos and Amharas. TPLF thus became a national opposition party and a sub-national incumbent. Even though Tigray's choice was voluntary, the consequence was still a government with fewer Tigrayans.

Dissolution alienated not only Tigrayans but also Oromos. An Oromo activist said "the fusion of the distinct entities that represented the various ethnic groups marks a return to Ethiopia's centralising and homogenising past" (Allo 2019). Another said "The plan [in dissolving EPRDF] is to destroy Oromo's nationalism in short" (Ibsa 2019b). Abiy's closest Oromo ally, Lemma Megersa, also opposed dissolution[8], adding that many Oromo incumbents shared in his disagreement (Gebreluel 2019). As discussed below, Lemma and several high-ranking Oromo incumbents elites were purged soon thereafter.

Abiy's allies defended dissolution as unifying Ethiopia (Fantahun 2019c). This appeased many Ethiopian nationalists and Amharas, who oppose ethnofederalism for allegedly causing

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[8]Lemma said "it is not the time to merge this party; there are too many dangers. We are in a transition...[which] is not the time to come out with something new...we should be focused on keeping the peace and securing the country...[to] make sure the election ahead of us is conducted peacefully (Sileshi 2019).

Table 5.3. Centralization and Exclusion in Ethiopia, 2018-22.

Sources of Centralization	Sources of Exclusion
Foreign support for national government	Purges of Tigrayan and Oromo incumbents
Repression of pro-autonomy protesters	Increased reliance on Amhara and Ethiopian nationalist incumbents
Prime Minister's centralist ideology	Gender inclusion furthers ethnic exclusion

disunity (Pausewang 2005).[9] Yet others (especially Amhara ethno-nationalists) saw dissolution as a distraction or as a covert Oromo power grab.[10]

EPRDF's dissolution was consequential for the three motivating crises discussed below, for Ethiopia's autocratization, and for the Tigray War. First, dissolution was one of several factors behind the Jawar Mohammed "Bodyguard" protests in Oromia and Addis Ababa, which prompted authoritarian repression. Second, dissolution provoked Tigray's sub-national government to hold elections in defiance of the national government in 2020. This worsening relationship exploded in warfare in late 2020.

5.2.2 Centralization

I move next to more general developments with respect to centralization and exclusion. These are displayed in Table 5.3.

One source of re-centralization came from foreign support. Abiy strengthened relations with the U.S., U.A.E., Israel, and Eritrea throughout 2018. In turn, these new allies provided financial, security, and political support to Abiy's national government. For example, U.A.E. provided $3 billion to Ethiopia's treasury in June 2018 (Maasho 2018b)[11] and invested in national development priorities, e.g., Abiy's "beautifying Addis Ababa" project through condominium construction in November 2018 (Terrefe 2020). Israel provided security support, using its

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[9]An Ethiopian nationalist elite said "It will definitely play the role of toning down ethnic politics and pulling down the nation to the center. I strongly believe this is what Abiy is doing" (Fantahun 2019c).

[10]An Amhara ethno-nationalist said "I believe that this strategic idea originated with [Oromo incumbents], which undoubtedly destroyed [Amhara incumbents]...but with the possibility of maintaining its own existence and remaining [the only] actor" (Molla 2019).

[11]One federal planning and development bureaucrat (Interview 2023) noted that the national government arguably misspent these funds and thus foreclosed opportunities to strengthen itself.

Mossad Intelligence Agency to train Ethiopia's National Intelligence Security Service, Abiy's former employer. And the U.S. provided political support in its endorsement of Abiy's economic liberalism and religious evangelism (Haustein & Feyissa 2021).

Foreign support was crucial for re-centralization because Abiy's domestic support was shallow in 2018 (Fisher & Gebrewahd 2019). Recall from chapter 4 that many incumbents selected Abiy as PM merely as an alternative to Tigrayan rule. After his selection, Abiy thus faced both lukewarm support as well as outright opposition. Foreign support helped Abiy co-opt and disregard his incumbent rivals, particularly those whose control over security or economic assets rivaled the national government's power. This included Tigrayan sub-national incumbents in control of the military and state-owned enterprises (Verhoeven & Woldemariam 2022).

Another source of re-centralization was the national government's resistance to ethnic Sidamas'[12] demands for decentralization (Tronvoll 2021b). In July 2019, Sidamas began protesting for their constitutional right to a statehood referendum, which the national government refused to grant. Sidama sub-national incumbents –themselves beneficiaries of the relatively decentralized system that brought Abiy to power– asserted themselves and threatened to simply declare statehood. Abiy's government responded to this assertiveness with repression, leading to over 60 deaths (Crisis Group 2019a). Only after Abiy's conduct was denounced abroad was a referendum permitted in November 2019. The result was near unanimous support among Sidamas, which created Ethiopia's ninth regional state.

Other centralizing developments after 2018 were more symbolic. This included Abiy's centralist rhetoric or ideology of *Medemer*, meaning "addition" in Amharic (Behailu 2019).[13] *Medemer* implores Ethiopians to embrace their *national* unity, the consequences of which will "add" together and create positive-sum outcomes. By contrast, TPLF and EPRDF's *ethno-nationalism* was portrayed as leading to zero-sum or negative outcomes, e.g., ethnic groups

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[12]Sidamas were the largest group in Ethiopia's Southern Nations Nationalities People's state and for years had demanded autonomy. However, the south's dependence on the national government meant that Sidama interests were ignored (Abbink 1998, Lyons 2019).

[13]Elite rhetoric can be an important component of autocratization, as in Donald Trump's disdain for the press and elections (Lieberman et al. 2019).

fighting over sub-national borders. *Medemer* is a noticeably centralist ideology in its call for a "strong, unified state," one that transcends ethno-national differences (Tronvoll 2022, 165). In a slight against his predecessors, Abiy said "Ethiopians can now imagine a future based not on ethnic chauvinism [of sub-national identities], but on unity" (Ahmed 2021).[14] For one of Abiy's former allies (Interview 2023), Abiy was very sympathetic to sentiments among security sector elites that ethnic politics were destabilizing Ethiopia. Despite some initial optimism,[15] Abiy's *Medemer* rhetoric was eventually seen as endorsing centralization (Opalo & Smith 2021).[16] *Medemer* does not explicitly denounce ethnofederalism, but the latter is certainly viewed less favorably than on TPLF/EPRDF's ideology of "revolutionary democracy" (Ishiyama 2021).[17]

In addition to his centralist ideology, Abiy took symbolic actions that invoked Ethiopia's "glorious" history of centralization (Marzagora 2017). For example, in late 2018 Abiy installed a statue of Emperor Menelik (1866-89), who subdued, colonized, and centralized control over present-day Oromia (Clapham 1975, (Bearak 2019). This was significant because Oromos –Abiy's own ethnic group– were a key proponent of decentralization. Unsurprisingly, the statue's installation was polarizing.[18] One of Abiy's key advisors validated Oromos' fears in a 2020 statement that "we will continue Menelik's project" (Fiseha 2021). Finally, Abiy opened a tourist destination in Addis Ababa called "Unity Park" in October 2019 that houses memorabilia from

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[14]This use of "chauvinism" was opposite to TPLF-EPRDF's usage after 1991. Recall from chapter 3 that TPLF denounced its nationalist opponents after 1991 as chauvinists who sought to reproduce Amhara supremacy. By contrast, Abiy's coalition was now accusing the ethno-nationalists of chauvinism.

[15]An Oromo opposition leader said *Medemer* is "anchored in hope and optimism...and reconciliation, the idea that we are diverse but most of us wish to see a more fair, equal, more democratic, tolerant, and more substantively just Ethiopia" (Allo 2018a).

[16]Another Oromo leader said "Abiy wants to unify Ethiopia under his *Medemer* philosophy. But *Medemer* simply means assimilation and the flattening of identity into one. Anyone who stands in Abiy's way is his enemy" (Pilling & Schipani 2020).

[17]Recall that for TPLF/EPRDF, the "highest" conception of democracy would have to prioritize ethnic and national group rights over individual, liberal rights (Bach 2011).

[18]An Ethiopian nationalist opposition leader thanked Abiy for "fulfilling one of my fondest dreams to-day...[cementing] a vision of Ethiopia rising from the grave of ethnic apartheid tyranny." He contrasted Abiy's respect for Menelik with TPLF and PM Meles Zenawi's disrespect: "to me, [Meles] is only a *woyane* [derogatory term for Tigrayans] avatar...the hate that coursed in his blood when he was alive today courses in the blood of every *woyane* thug in hideout or sitting silently gnashing his/her teeth among us." (Mariam 2019). By contrast, an Oromo opposition leader called the statue "an affront to Oromos and to all other ethnic groups crushed by the emperors...As long as they elevate Menelik, we will dig out his crimes and make generations know" (Chala 2020).

Ethiopia's imperial era (Lyons 2021). "Unity" was interpreted as a symbolic endorsement of (or "dog-whistle" for) the centralist project (Gallagher et al. 2021).

In a further centralizing move, several powerful sub-national incumbents were purged. This included two members of Oromia's incumbent Central Committee, as well as Lemma Megersa, who was slated to become PM in 2018 before stepping aside for Abiy. As one of Abiy's few visible incumbent critics, Lemma said of Abiy's rhetoric in 2019: "*Medemer* shouldn't start from somewhere else, but should be something about Oromos...strengthening the [Oromo]...starting from the bottom of Oromo society to the top...our differences should be understood" (Sileshi 2019). In 2020, Lemma was purged, then placed under house arrest, and is now living in exile (Tronvoll 2021a). One of Lemma's associates told me he was "deeply suspicious of Abiy's aggressive approach toward TPLF" (Interview with Oromo opposition leader, 2023).

Other centralizing developments were significant despite only reaching the level of proposal. For example, a 2020 Ethiopian Ministry of Peace document proposed that (a) the national government dissolve and re-constitute sub-national police forces and that (b) future recruitment to and promotion within sub-national forces be subject to national control (Fiseha 2021). Such a proposal would almost entirely centralize security powers in the national government.

Another proposal from 2019 stipulated that sub-national governments be required to teach Amharic (Fiseha 2021). This undermined the 1994 constitution, which empowers sub-national governments to choose educational and administrative languages. More importantly, it undermined the constitution's decentralist spirit, namely as a redress to centuries of marginalization for non-Amharic speakers.

5.2.3 Exclusion

Ethiopia's 2018 liberalization itself had exclusionary implications. Recall that liberal reforms included "constraints on [human rights abuses by] security forces." This primarily manifested in purges, arrests, and demotions of Tigrayan national military and police elites. The

legal cases were perhaps strong against some such Tigrayans for past abuses (de Waal 2021). Nevertheless, these security-sector changes shifted national power away from and thus excluded Tigray (Interview with former military leader, 2018).

Note that many of the centralizing factors discussed above had exclusionary implications. For example, foreign support empowered Abiy's national government vis-a-vis sub-national governments, as well as Abiy's Oromara coalition vis-a-vis Tigrayans (Fisher & Gebrewahd 2019). Similarly, Abiy's *Medemer* ideology not only called for a strong national government but hearkened back to a time of Amhara supremacy (Berhe & Gebresilassie 2021). Abiy erected a statue of not merely a centralist emperor (Menelik), but the face of Amhara colonialism. Finally, the firing and arrest of Lemma Megersa –Abiy's most powerful Oromo ally– not only weakened the Oromia sub-national government. It also weakened national Oromo incumbents, who could no longer improve their bargaining position by appealing to Lemma and his grassroots support among Oromos (Verhoeven & Woldemariam 2022).

One exclusionary development after 2018 was that Ethiopian nationalists and Amhara ethno-nationalists became more powerful within the national government, including figures like Abiy's evangelical spiritual advisor (Haustein & Feyissa 2021). Another two advisors were among Ethiopia's most popular opposition elites who returned from exile as part of the 2018 liberalization. Of these latter two, one –Berhanu Nega– lead Ethiopia's most successful opposition coalition during the 2005 election crisis discussed in chapter 3. Recall that Berhanu's coalition campaigned in 2005 against ethnofederalism and used anti-Tigrayan dog whistles (Aalen & Tronvoll 2009). Berhanu's advisory services thus infected Abiy's decision-making with centralist, exclusionary attitudes (Interview with sub-national incumbent, 2023). This became particularly evident during the 2020-22 Tigray War, during which Berhanu played a key role advising Abiy (Tronvoll 2022). For one of Abiy's former allies, Abiy's embrace of "Amhara agendas" was a way to marginalize or "box out" potential Oromo competitors (Interview with Oromo opposition leader, 2023).

As Abiy became more reliant on Amharas and Ethiopian nationalists, the result was

progressive exclusion of Tigrayans and Oromos from the national government. Some Tigrayans alleged this even during liberalization in 2018, when Abiy's democratizing reforms and cabinet selections were made in consultation with primarily Amhara incumbents (Tronvoll 2021a, Berhe & Gebreselassie 2021). This was a departure from PM Hailemariam's premiership discussed in chapter 4, when the national government made consensual, multi-ethnic decisions. Abiy's relations with Amhara incumbents strengthened after the 2019 coup crisis discussed below: alleged Amhara coup-plotters were arrested en masse, enamoring Amhara incumbents whose rivals were eliminated (Verhoeven & Woldemariam 2022).

Although ethnic inclusion decreased, *non*-ethnic inclusion increased, evident in Abiy selecting a record number of women to his cabinet in October 2018 (BBC 2018). Despite this being much "to the delight of Western audiences...What such "inclusivity" veiled were reshuffles in which virtually all potential rivals to the prime minister were removed from the cabinet and replaced by novices dependent on his patronage" (Verhoeven & Woldemariam 2022, 19).[19] In other words, because Ethiopia is a patriarchal society, these women appointees were likely less powerful and experienced than their predecessors (Smith 2013).

5.3 Crises: Mass Protests and Attempted Coup

This section discusses three crises that motivated national incumbents to respond with authoritarian repression, displayed in Table 5.4. These crises –two mass protests and an attempted coup– seriously threatened the national government's control over Ethiopia's two largest regions (Interview with former bureaucrat in Prime Minister's Office, 2023). Each accelerated ethno-nationalist sentiment. And each were marked by cycles of violence, repression, and lawlessness. Yet unlike in chapter 4, national incumbents resolved each crisis with authoritarian repression, not democratic concessions. I argue that this reflected incumbents' centralized, exclusionary control.

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[19]Abiy's move resembled another U.S. ally, former Afghani president Ashraf Ghani. Ghani appointed many women to ministerial positions in a way that appeased Washington while distracting from his authoritarian ambitions (Murtazashvili 2022).

Table 5.4. Three crises motivating Ethiopia's 2019 autocratization. Each were followed by mass arrests, human rights abuses, imprisonment of journalist and media blackouts, and opposition party targeting.

Crisis	Description	Deaths
Amhara Attempted Coup	Amhara opponent released from prison, attempts coup	12
Oromia 2019 Protests	Oromo opponent accuses natl. govt. of targeting him, protests ensue	86
Oromia 2020 Protests	Oromo singer killed, protests ensue	239

Attempted Sub-National Coup in Amhara

The attempted "coup"[20] in Amhara regional state[21] seriously challenged Ethiopia's national government for several reasons. First, it threatened national control over Ethiopia's second largest sub-national government, Amhara. Second, key national and sub-national incumbents were killed, e.g., the National Chief of Staff and Amhara's regional president. Third, it was an outgrowth of the ethno-nationalism that Abiy's national government sought to limit, e.g., through his nationalist *Medemer* rhetoric. And finally, the coup was undertaken by a beneficiary (released political prisoner) of Ethiopia's 2018 liberalization.

The regional coup's perpetrator, Brigadier General Asaminew Tsige, had fought against the *Derg* dictatorship before 1991. Asaminew was part of an Amhara opposition front that coordinated with TPLF/EPRDF. He was sentenced to life imprisonment in 2009 for allegedly plotting a coup against the national government, which his supporters dismissed as a Tigrayan conspiracy against Amharas (Kifle 2009). Asaminew was released from prison as part of Ethiopia's 2018 liberalization. After his release, he was appointed as head of Amhara's sub-national security bureau. Asaminew used his incumbent position to mobilize Amhara ethno-

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[20]I note that whether (a) a coup was even attempted and (b) General Asaminew was its perpetrator are both contentious (Verhoeven & Woldemariam 2022). In order to limit use of the word "alleged", I assume both are true.

[21]Intuitively, coups are episodes of violence perpetrated by state actors (e.g., military leaders) against *national* incumbents. However, we need not exclude violence against sub-national incumbents from our definition (Aidt & Leon 2019, 328).

national sentiment, comparing the ascendancy of Oromos like Abiy to an invasion.[22] Concurrent with his incumbent position, Asaminew was affiliated with an Amhara opposition militia (Yusuf 2019). Asaminew was thus disturbed by perceived changes to Ethiopia's national government, specifically the alleged exclusion of Amharas. (This despite my claim that Ethiopia after 2018 was characterized by the opposite trend.) He was also apparently motivated by news of his impending dismissal from the sub-national post (Interview with sub-national executive, 2023).

In June 2019, Asaminew attempted a coup in Amhara's capital. Amhara's regional president, the National Chief of Staff, and several high-ranking officials were killed. Asaminew was himself killed in a standoff with police, bringing the death toll to 12 (Clionadh et al. 2022).

The national government responded with immediate autocratizing measures in Amhara, particularly repression and mass imprisonment (Tazebew 2021). Asaminew's alleged co-conspirators and several Amhara opposition elites were arrested and imprisoned without trial (BBC 2019). Autocratization not only helped quell the crisis; it also improved Abiy's relationship with Amhara incumbents. Indeed, the latter benefited from the elimination of their opposition rivals (Verhoeven & Woldemariam 2022). Nevertheless, the coup polarized Amharas: conspiracies circulated that Asaminew was not involved or that Asaminew's involvement helped Abiy justify anti-Amhara or autocratizing measures.[23] According to one [non-Amhara] sub-national executive (Interview 2023), the national government clearly used the coup as a pretext to repress, dubiously connecting events in Amhara to violence in Addis Ababa.

Partly because of Asaminew's history of anti-Tigrayan speech, the attempted coup worsened relations between Amhara and Tigrayan incumbents (Fiseha 2019, Tazebew 2021).[24]

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[22]In one speech, Asaminew said that Amharas faced their greatest threat in 500 years, referencing the Oromo kingdom's invasions of the Ethiopian empire. He then encouraged Amharas to arm themselves (Yusuf 2019).

[23]An Amhara opposition leader said "The campaign of arrests...isn't just directed against a party, but is also an identity-based attack" (France24 2019). Another said that "compared to the immediate and violent response to the "coup" in Amhara," the national government [is] clearly unconcerned with violence against Amharas in Oromia (Nega 2019a). (Notice "coup" in quotations, suggesting Asaminew did not intend to overthrow the government, or that no such coup occurred.)

[24]TPLF's Getachew Reda said

[the coup] is what you get, when you let the forces of anarchy loose on the land, when bandits

After Tigrayan incumbents blamed Amhara's sub-national government for the coup[25], Amharas criticized Tigrayans for their domination between 1991-2018, amplifying some conspiracies in circulation.[26]

Oromia Protests

The October 2019 Oromia protests[27] seriously challenged the national government for similar reasons as the Amhara coup. The protests threatened national control over Ethiopia's largest sub-national government (Oromia) and were an outgrowth of Oromo ethno-nationalism. In addition, the protests were instigated by a beneficiary of Ethiopia's 2018 democratizing changes.

The protests were intertwined with Jawar Mohammed, one of Ethiopia's most prominent Oromo opposition leaders (Østebø et al. 2021). While in exile, Jawar played a key role coordinating the 2014-18 protesters. As part of the 2018 democratic concessions, terrorism charges were dropped against Jawar. In addition, his Oromia Media Network was permitted to open offices in Ethiopia. Jawar returned to Ethiopia in July 2018 and joined an Oromo opposition party.

Relations between Jawar and Abiy worsened over time. In October 2019, Jawar claimed that his bodyguard was removed in the middle of the night. Jawar said on Facebook that this was a ploy by Abiy to expose Jawar to his enemies. Mass protests followed in Oromia and Addis Ababa. Jawar was also aware of plans to dissolve EPRDF, which he saw as leading to re-centralization (Associated Foreign Press 2019).

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who were known to have wreaked havoc were granted a hero's welcome..[I'm] ashamed of myself for not having stood up to the granting of such an amnesty bereft of moral justification (Fantahun 2019b).

[25]TPLF criticized ANDM for failing to secure peace, hosting "parasite groups working to destabilize the nation [i.e., employing Asaminew]...ask[ing ANDM] to apologize to the Ethiopian people for creating [the situation]" (Getnet 2019)

[26]An ANDM statement said "TPLF is the one who caused the country to have a nasty political situation...[TPLF] is collaborating with the groups who are working to disturb the county and the region" (Getnet 2019).

[27]As Brass (2011) reminds us, characterizing political violence is a political matter. Some protests, such as the two that I discuss, may in fact have been riots. And some riots may be pogroms. Because the chapter 4 protest crisis –which also involved political violence– was characterized as a protest, I use the same terminology here.

The national government responded with repression, internet shutdowns, and mass imprisonment. At least 86 deaths were associated with the protests. Jawar was accused on state media and especially by Amhara elites of inciting the violence (Østebø et al. 2021). According to one of PM Abiy's former colleagues in the Prime Minister's Office (Interview 2023), the national government used the protests' inter-ethnic character as a pretext to repress.

The protests accelerated ethno-national divisions among Ethiopians. Many Oromo elites sided with Jawar,[28] seeing the bodyguard incident as evidence of Abiy's commitment to (1) re-centralization, because Jawar was an ethnofederalism proponent and (2) exclusion, because supporters of the most prominent *Oromo* opposition leader were jailed (Interview with Oromo Liberation Front spokesperson, 2023). By contrast, Ethiopian nationalist and Amhara elites denounced Abiy for his alleged softness on Jawar.[29] Jawar was accused of furthering an Amhara "genocide." Partly because the protests claimed many Amhara lives, Amhara-Oromo relations worsened.

Second Oromia Protests

The June 2020 Oromia protests challenged national incumbents for similar reasons as the two aforementioned crises. They threatened the national government's control over Oromia and furthered ethno-national grievances. The protesters were guided by several Oromo opposition elites who benefited from the 2018 liberalization.

Protests were sparked by the death of Oromo singer Hachalu Hundessa. Hachalu was considered the voice of the 2014-18 protests that prompted Ethiopia's 2018 liberalization. In June 2020, Hachalu was assassinated and protests ensued. Hachalu's killers remain unknown, although national government officials quickly accused an Oromo opposition party. During the

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[28]An Oromo opposition leader said "It is our belief that some government official speeches, writings, and state sponsored media...fueled this...chaos. Therefore, the incumbent government...is responsible for the current tragedy" (Ibsa 2019c). By contrast, one of Jawar's colleagues in the Oromo Federalist Congress opposition party, said "Activists should take it upon themselves not to over step the red line" (Tadesse 2019). This second statement evidenced a view common among older Oromo elites that Jawar had become too powerful (Interview with former federal foreign affairs bureaucrat, 2018).

[29]An Amhara opposition leader complained that "Abiy has not yet condemned Jawar. By what criteria did the government negotiate with Jawar for 8 days? We will fight hard on our duty [to rectify this]" (Nega 2019b.

protests, Oromos demanded that Hachalu be buried in Addis Ababa as a symbol of Oromia's special constitutional right to the capital city.[30] By contrast, the national government wanted him to be buried in his hometown south of Addis. This dispute furthered the protests' intensity.

The national government responded to the protests with repression, internet blackouts, and political imprisonment. At least 200 died and 10,000 fled their homes. As in the above Jawar protests, the national government ostensibly used the protests' inter-ethnic character as a pretext for repression (Interview with sub-national executive, 2023). Minority Rights Group (2020) found evidence of ethnic cleansing during the protests. Many Oromo opposition leaders and supporters were imprisoned, including Jawar Mohammed. A sub-national executive (Interview 2023) and federal bureaucrat (Interview 2023) –both of whom are non-Oromos– said that the national government used the protests as an opportunity to both (a) eliminate Jawar, who stood to challenge Abiy's grip on power, and (b) improve its favor among Amharas, many of whom view Jawar negatively. Non-Oromo leaders were also imprisoned, indicating that the national government may have used the Hachalu protests as a pretext for more widespread autocratization (Tazebew 2021). A former federal prosecutor (Interview 2023) said that the national government entirely directed Hachalu's death investigation, circumventing the Oromia justice bureau's authority.

Much as during the October 2019 Oromia protests, autocratization was seen by Oromos as evidence of Abiy's commitment to (1) re-centralization, because supporters of decentralized federalism were imprisoned, and (2) exclusion, because many Oromos were imprisoned.[31] After the Hachalu protests, Oromo voices for secession became more prominent (Østebø & Tronvoll 2020). By contrast, many Amhara elites again emphasized that Amharas were the primary victims of protests, denouncing the lawlessness in Oromia.[32] The second protests thus also

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[30]An Oromo activist said that Abiy's statement after Hachalu's death "was woefully inadequate and for us...Who are the 'enemies' [that killed Hachalu] and why can't he name them? Why did authorities insist on taking [Hachalu's] body to his birthplace, and risk people's lives?" (Allo 2020).

[31]Jawar Mohammed said "They did not just kill Hachalu. They shot at the heart of the Oromo Nation, once again...You can kill us, all of us, you can never ever stop us!" (Al Jazeera 2020a).

[32]An Amhara opposition leader called the protests "anti-Amhara genocide" (Molla 2020a).

worsened Amhara-Oromo relations.

5.4   Autocratization

This section provides evidence that Ethiopia's national government did in fact autocratize after 2018. After discussing two alternative explanations of this response, I discuss my own explanation, which focuses on how autocratization was enabled by centralization and ethnic exclusion.

Ethiopia's 2019 autocratization reversed many of its 2018 democratizing changes, as Table 5.5 indicates.[33] Note that national incumbents faced crises –key events that motivated them to autocratization– in both 2019 and 2020. Some of the indices thus pick up autocratizing changes in 2020 while others appear in 2021.

I summarize each autocratizing change in turn, omitting discussion of the national government's March 2020 election postponements due to COVID-19.[34] First, despite releasing many political prisoners during 2018, many others were or remained imprisoned thereafter. Several hundred Amhara citizens were arrested after the attempted coup in June 2019 (Freedom House 2020). Dozens were imprisoned in July 2019 as Sidamas agitated for greater decentralization (Addis Standard 2019). Over 5000 were arrested after the June 2020 Oromia protests, many of whom were put "in incommunicado detention with their whereabouts unknown" (Amnesty International 2020b). Ethiopia's June 2021 national elections did not meet the standards for "electoral democracy" partly because so many Oromo and Amhara opposition elites and their supporters remained imprisoned (Reuters 2021). Amhara and Oromo opposition leaders were vocal about the depth of political imprisonment from as early as 2018.[35] As I discuss in the

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[33]That the 2018 changes so quickly reversed presents a worry that Ethiopia's liberalization was not "genuine", or simply disingenuous "distractions" from planned autocratizing changes in 2019. This worry may turn out true, but it does not invalidate the claim that democratic concessions occurred in 2018.

[34]Election postponement is a controversial indicator of autocratization: Autocrats can certainly benefit from postponement, for which COVID-19 might have served as a pretext in Ethiopia. And indeed, many Ethiopian opposition elites expressed this sentiment (Endeshaw 2020). However, many democracies also postponed elections due to COVID-19 without ostensibly autocratizing (Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance 2023).

[35]An Oromo leader lamented that "over 5000 political prisoners remain incarcerated...accused of being affiliated

Table 5.5. Indicators of Ethiopia's 2019 Autocratization. Source: Varieties of Democracy (Coppedge et al. 2023).

Indicator	Change	% Change
Freedom from Torture	.54 (2019) → .17 (2020)	-68
Opposition Party Autonomy	.44 (2020) → -.08 (2021)	-118
Harassment of Journalists	.98 (2020) → -.06 (2021)	-106
Media Censorship	-1.42 (2019) → -2.06 (2020)	-45
Media Self-Censorship	.18 (2020) → -.2 (2021)	-211

Postscript, the Tigray War also involved the mass imprisonment and detention of Tigrayans.

Second, despite three key opposition parties being legalized as part of the 2018 democratization, opposition parties faced harassment and repression thereafter. Leaders of an Amhara opposition party were arrested after the June 2019 attempted coup despite having only an alleged connection to the coup-plotter (Freedom House 2020). Another opposition party, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), was especially vocal about being targeted throughout 2019.[36] OLF did not interpret its 2018 peace agreement with the national government to involve disarmament. By late 2019, OLF had fragmented and its splinter group took up arms (Ezega 2019b). This Oromia splinter insurgency helped the national government justify further political imprisonment and state repression in Oromia. Harassment and targeting of Oromo parties deepened after the June 2020 Oromo protests (Freedom House 2021). An OLF spokesperson claimed (Interview 2023) that after the Hachalu protest crisis, nearly all of its offices in Oromia had been shut down or vandalized. And as I discuss in the Postscript, the national government targeted Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) members and alleged supporters throughout the Tigray War.

Third, reports of military and police abuses of human rights were widespread. Between 2019-20, Amnesty International (2020a) documented 39 extra-judicial killings in just one zone of Oromia, a likely pogrom that received support by Amhara authorities against Oromos (resulting

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with the Oromo Liberation Front [opposition party]" (Mohammed 2018a). An Amhara leader lambasted Abiy for lying, during his 2019 Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, about the existence of political prisoners, "whose only crimes are being Amharas and involvement in Amhara politics" (Chanie 2019).

[36]OLF's president said that "[EPRDF] returned to its usual business of intimidation, vilification and imprisonment of the OLF members for carrying its flags, in addition to showing the signs of full scale war" (Ibsa 2019a).

in 130 deaths), and widespread forcible eviction of Oromo pastoralist communities. Another Amnesty (2020c) report detailed police killings of at least 16 people following protests in Ethiopia's southern region, including homeless and mentally disabled bystanders. The Tigray War was characterized by extremely grave human rights abuses, including genocidal violence, sexual violence, and destruction of agricultural and health facilities (Amnesty International 2022).

Fourth, media freedom worsened, this despite the legalization of many opposition media outlets and release of journalists from prison in 2018. The national government shut down the internet nine times in 2019, including after the attempted coup in Amhara. Oromia's internet was shut down for two consecutive months in early 2020 (Human Rights Watch 2020) and again after the June 2020 protests (Mumo 2019). Tigray was without internet for two years during the Tigray War, complicating efforts by journalists to document war crimes and for international organizations to provide aid to survivors (Zelalem 2022).

In addition to shutdowns, journalists were imprisoned and non-governmental media networks raided and closed. After the July 2019 protests in Sidama, three Sidama Media Network workers were arrested and had their offices closed down (Committee to Protect Journalists 2019). After the June 2020 Oromia protests, the recently legalized Oromia Media Network was raided and several employees detained (Committee to Protect Journalists 2020). In February 2020, the national government passed a vague law that "makes the intentional publication, distribution, and possession of false information illegal" (Freedom House 2021). And in November 2020, the Prime Minister's office launched a "fact-checking" page that deemed many independent media "fake," enemies of the people.[37]

Despite these changes, some supporters of Ethiopia's national government claim that autocratization did not in fact occur. These supporters insist that claims of autocratization are over-reactions to predictable regime change processes. Recall from chapter 2 that during regime changes, opposition groups may violently vie for power (Leff 1999). In these instances, perhaps

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[37]This phenomenon has been broadly associated with autocratization (Kaufman & Haggard 2019).

the national government's repression constitutes a reasonable or necessary response to non-state violence. For example, some argued that the national government's imprisonment of Amharas after the attempted coup crisis was a reasonable response given the coup's seriousness.[38]

Ultimately, claims that autocratization did not occur appear as ideological defenses of the national government. Whether the latter's imprisonment of opponents and repression was "reasonable" is irrelevant to whether its methods were or were not authoritarian.

Alternative Explanations

What can explain these autocratizing changes? This subsection discusses two accounts, focusing on the effects of Ethiopia's 2018 liberalization and an inter-ethnic power struggle. These are not necessarily rival accounts. Instead, they present important pieces of the post-2018 story. I attempt to connect these pieces through my account of the importance of centralization and ethnic exclusion.

A first account claims that autocratization was caused by Ethiopia's 2018 liberalization. For these observers, the national government's repression was unsurprising in light of the destabilizing democratic changes that preceded it. This explanation is theoretically well-founded: recall from chapter 2 that during regime changes, conflicts between prospective winners and losers can spiral into violence, to which the state responds with repression (Beissinger 2002). In Ethiopia's case, these accounts emphasize how autocratization "emerged as a result of the reforms Abiy introduced –in particular, the removal of the ban on opposition parties unleashed long-suppressed rivalries among ethnic communities" (Breuning & Ishiyama 2021, 986). Similarly for Young (2021, 78), "Abiy's policy of reconciling with foreign based armed groups weakened the central state, made parts of the country ungovernable and led to...[the] attempted coup in Amhara" discussed above. To summarize, liberalization empowered violent opponents in 2018, to which the national government responded with repression in 2019.

Explaining one regime change by reference to a previous one is a compelling and simple

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[38]For example, an Oromo opposition leader bemoaned those "in the Amhara region...[who don't want to] work with the central government to make it more harmonious" (Oneko 2019).

strategy. In this case, however, it is not clear why the national government responded by autocratizing instead of further liberalizing. Indeed, if –as Young (2021) claims– the national government was weak as a result of liberalizing in 2018, then why did this not force it to concede further democratic reforms? I argue that autocratization did not reflect national incumbents' weaknesses but their relative strength, which was facilitated by re-centralization and ethnic exclusion.

A second alternative explanation is that autocratization was caused by a ethnic power struggle between the national government and its (mainly Tigrayan) rivals. This account emphasizes the losses incurred by Tigrayan incumbents after Abiy –an Oromo– was selected as PM. Autocratization was thus a response by the national government to Tigray's various actions that undermined Abiy. Importantly on this account, Tigrayan incumbents sought to cover up their destructive actions by falsely claiming that re-centralization was occurring. In other words, accounts like mine that emphasize re-centralization are simply echoing the propaganda of cynical Tigrayan incumbents (Melesse 2021). For example, ethnic Sidamas' demands for decentralization in 2019 were violently repressed until statehood was reluctantly granted. Some critics argue that focusing on the national government's repression was a cynical attempt to distract from an otherwise decentralized outcome, namely a new regional state (Borago 2020).

But why exactly would Tigrayan incumbents make false claims about re-centralization? On these accounts, Tigray's strategy was ostensibly to increase its own support (among constituents who favor decentralization) as well as to increase opposition to the national government. One commentator said "Most hypocritical was TPLF's accusation that Abiy's administration is 'unitarist' and adamant to centralise power, as if its own 27 years in charge were not marked by centralization in the name of 'revolutionary democracy' and 'democratic centralism'" (Moges 2022).

It is likely that the national government's opponents sought to undermine it by making claims about re-centralization. However, this is still consistent with re-centralization having occurred, as I argued above. Those who dispute re-centralization must defend the claim that

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*de*centralization occurred, or that Ethiopia's centralization did not change after 2018. In either case, more is required than simply imputing motives to opposition elites.

Effects of Centralization and Exclusion on National Incumbents' Incentives

How exactly did centralization and exclusion affect national incumbents' opportunities to autocratize? Ideally, we could find evidence that incumbents were not hampered by their dependence on (a) sub-national incumbents or (b) ethnic rivals in the national government, and that they were not under great pressure to liberalize. However, such evidence is scanty.

We can begin to think about the theory's plausibility by analyzing the counterfactuals for each crisis, and in a way that is informed by the 1991-2018 period. These counterfactuals are not themselves evidence. Instead, they help deepen our comparative understanding of each case.

A first counterfactual concerns national incumbents' autocratizing responses: If they had become *less* powerful and decisive after 2018, then their responses to each crisis would arguably have been less immediate, effective, and extensive. Recall from chapter 4 that the protest crisis dragged on for four years (2014-18). The national government became more decentralized and ethnically inclusive especially after Meles Zenawi's death. National incumbents were ineffective in their response, deploying a mix of inaction and repression. The success of repression was limited to areas where protesters had not (a) infiltrated local security institutions or (b) received incumbent sanction (Yusuf 2019). Ultimately, national incumbents were compelled to make democratic concessions.

In this chapter, by contrast, Ethiopia's national government was much more urgent and effective in its responses to crises. The 2019 Amhara coup crisis lasted less than a day, the first Oromia protests lasted five days, and the second protests lasted two days. In each case, autocratization was relatively immediate: protesters were imprisoned, the internet was shut down, and political parties were targeted. National incumbents were capable of responding as such because their sub-national and national ethnic rivals were weak.

A second counterfactual concerns sub-national incumbents' responses: If sub-national

governments had been *more* powerful, then they would have likely seen the crises as opportunities to denounce and undermine the national government. Recall from chapter 4 that the 2014-18 protest crisis created opportunities for Oromo and Amhara sub-national incumbents to support their protesting constituents and to ally against the national government. This alliance propelled the "Oromara" (Oromo + Amhara) coalition to power. Oromaras could act on these opportunities because decentralization empowered them vis-a-vis the national government.

In this chapter, by contrast, sub-national incumbents mostly toed the national line after each crisis. This despite opportunities for them to imitate the Oromaras' successful past behavior. Consider first the 2019 Amhara coup crisis. It is true that mass imprisonment of Amhara opponents benefited Amhara sub-national incumbents. However, the latter could have ostensibly obtained greater benefits had they denounced the national government. This strategy would have likely appealed to Amhara opponents and residents, many of whom supported the coup's alleged perpetrator, Asaminew Tsige. And it would have satisfied sub-national incumbents themselves, some of whom were friendly with Asaminew (Tazebew 2021). The coup thus presented opportunities for Amhara sub-national incumbents to improve their bargaining position by demanding Amhara-centric goods, such as the expansion of Amhara's territory into Tigray. Instead, the weak Amhara sub-national incumbents went along with repression and alienated their constituents.

Both 2020 Oromia protests evidence similar sub-national dynamics: If they had been more capable, then Oromo sub-national incumbents would have benefited from allying with the Oromo protesters and denouncing Abiy's regime. The protests also created opportunities for Oromo sub-national incumbents to demand Oromo-centric goods, such as greater decentralization (Østebø & Tronvoll 2020). But many Oromo incumbents similarly went along with repression and alienated their constituents. According to multiple incumbents (Interviews 2023), the 2019-20 crises were resolved so quickly because the national government did not have to deal with sub-national non-cooperation.

5.5   Conclusion

This chapter provided a third case study to corroborate the chapter 2 theory of regime change under autocratic ethnofederalism (AEF). Consistent with my expectations, I found that incumbents in Ethiopia's national government –who worked to re-centralize power and create a more exclusive executive– responded to three crises with authoritarian repression. Centralization rendered national incumbents more powerful, while ethnic exclusion rendered them more decisive. The three crises –an attempted regional coup and two mass protests– enabled national incumbents to consolidate power, imprisoning opponents, targeting opposition parties, and censoring news media.

I first showed that Ethiopian national incumbents re-centralized power and took steps to create a more ethnically exclusive national government after 2018. For example, the national government repressed protesters who sought decentralization, erected monuments glorifying the country's centralized past, and purged ethnic Tigrayan and Oromo incumbents. These changes removed the previously existing obstacles to repressing challengers.

I then showed that national incumbents were seriously threatened by three crises. The crises motivated national incumbents to respond by autocratizing, which centralization and ethnic exclusion enabled them to do. Unlike in chapter 4, national incumbents were strong enough to respond with repression. Finally, I showed that Ethiopia did in fact autocratize.

Following Crisis Group (2019b), explaining the "precariousness of [Ethiopia's]...mooted transition to a more open and democratic order" is extremely important, not least because of its implications for the Tigray War. Nevertheless, this chapter does not incontrovertibly show that centralization and exclusion affected autocratization. It analyzes a short and complicated period of time. However, a careful analysis can show that my hypothesized variables played a role in Ethiopia's disappointing autocratization.

5.6 Postscript: Tigray War

This postscript argues that the chapter 2 theory of regime change under autocratic ethnofederalism can help explain why re-centralization and exclusion led not only to autocratization in 2019 but to war in 2020. As discussed above, Tigrayans' share of national power disproportionately decreased after 2018 with Abiy Ahmed's selection to PM. In addition, the national government variously strengthened itself vis-a-vis Tigray, e.g., reconciling with Eritrea. By mid-2020, Tigrayans were especially suspicious of the national government's intentions.

In March 2020, the national government postponed national and sub-national elections due to COVID-19. Tigray then proclaimed it would hold its sub-national elections regardless, which the national government denounced as unconstitutional. As both sides exchanged bellicose rhetoric, the national government eliminated Tigray's access to state funds and resources, a further centralizing measure.

Tigray held its elections in September 2020, thus challenging the national government. In November 2020, warfare erupted. Regardless of who fired the first shot, the Tigray elections and war served as a pretext for further autocratization: the national government imprisoned Tigrayans and abused human rights, imprisoned pro-Tigrayan journalists, and targeted Tigrayan and non-Tigrayan opposition parties. The national government was aided in these repressive efforts by Eritrea, which had helped it re-centralize power and exclude Tigray for two years prior. The war thus vindicated Tigrayans' fears about the national government's centralizing, exclusionary ambitions.

Crisis: Tigray's Sub-National Election

In March 2020, Ethiopia's national government postponed national and sub-national elections scheduled for September 2020, ostensibly because of COVID-19. Due to EPRDF's dissolution in December 2019, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) was by that time an opposition party at the national level and an incumbent at the sub-national level. TPLF

announced in May 2020 that Tigray would nonetheless hold sub-national elections, deploying highly antagonistic rhetoric.[39] The national government denounced this as unconstitutional. It thereby signaled its unwillingness to tolerate sub-national dissent, arguably a centralizing action.

In September 2020, Tigray held its elections –which were deemed free and fair by a small number of observers– and the TPLF won 99% of the vote (Getachew 2020).[40] Tigrayan incumbents and opponents celebrated the election outcome as increasing Tigray's autonomy vis-a-vis the national government, which the latter refused to tolerate.[41]

Given Tigrayans' fears of re-centralization and exclusion, "this was not an ordinary election, but a referendum on their...self-determination...[and] on TPLF's role as the protector of Tigrayan people and the spirit of...resistance against centralized rule and outsized outside influence" (Tronvoll 2021c). By contrast, Abiy's (increasingly Ethiopian nationalist and Amhara) support base called on him to use military force in Tigray.[42] The national election administration chair –a former Ethiopian nationalist opposition leader whose appointment to chair was lauded as a democratizing measure– joined Abiy in condemning Tigray's "illegal" elections (Tamene 2020).

The national government responded to Tigray's elections with further centralization, declaring it would "slash [Tigray's] funding" (Corey-Boulet 2020) and "sever any kind of relationship with the Tigray regional state" (Al Jazeera 2020b). Tigray sub-national incumbents called this "tantamount to a declaration of war" and said "Abiy is no longer a legitimate ruler" (Corey-Boulet 2020). Tigray "recall[ed] representatives at the federal level" and said "any decisions taken by Abiy's government going forward will not be applicable in Tigray" (Al

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[39]TPLF's president said "Come September, neither...federal nor regional government will longer have constitutional legitimacy, so not to conduct the election is parlous...The issue at stake is one of honoring the people's decision and respecting the constitution" (Ethiopia Observer 2020).

[40]While the elections may have been free, it is unlikely that they were fair. Indeed, few Tigrayan opposition parties had an *ex ante* chance of winning due to TPLF's repression after 1991, as discussed in chapter 3.

[41]A Tigrayan opposition leader said after the election "Tigray has officially become a de facto state...This is a big win for the people of Tigray" (Getachew 2020).

[42]An Amhara opposition leader said Tigray "looks assuredly set to conduct unconstitutional election, and the response from PM Abiy Ahmed's government should no longer be an either/or situation. It is such a defining moment at which the essential nature and characteristic of his government in relation to Amhara (and Ethiopia at large) is going to get revealed...stop the election!" (Molla 2020b).

Jazeera 2020b).

Tigray's sub-national elections both reflected and furthered the centralization and exclusion discussed above. Tigray was aggrieved due to its exclusion from the national government since 2018. Its sub-national elections were likely seen as a way to reverse this trend and challenge the national government. However, these ambitions backfired as Tigray's relationship with the national government worsened.

Tigray War

On October 29, 2020, Tigray rejected the national government's appointment of three senior officers to Ethiopia's northern military command base, which is stationed in Tigray (Tronvoll 2022). Shortly thereafter, Tigrayan incumbents began warning of attacks on Tigray by Ethiopian and Eritrean troops. On November 4, Tigrayan sub-national forces preemptively attacked the northern command and four other Tigray bases. Thus began the Tigray War, a multi-front war involving Ethiopia and Eritrea's militaries, Tigray's sub-national defense forces, and Amhara sub-national militias. Tigray was thus affirmed in its fear that the 2018 reconciliation with Eritrea would lead to a joint offensive against it. A [non-Tigrayan] sub-national incumbent said (Interview 2023) that even if it was unclear in 2018, reconciliation had certainly become a "war pact" by 2020.

Ethiopia's national government maintained that the war was a simple "law enforcement operation" intended to eliminate specific TPLF elites, with civilian casualties an unfortunate consequence.[43] It denied Eritrea's involvement for four months (BBC 2021b). However, credible reports soon emerged that Tigray was being subjected –particularly by Eritrea but also by Ethiopian forces– to serious human rights abuses, including genocidal and sexual violence and destruction of agricultural and health facilities (Tronvoll 2021d). The Tigray War pushed millions to starvation and arguably constituted a famine (Gladstone 2021). Fatality counts are disputed and politicized, but some estimate over 600,000 deaths and millions of displacements (Annys et

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[43]Of course, most law enforcement operations do not require aerial bombardment or tanks.

al. 2021). All warring parties, but especially Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Amhara, are accused of war crimes.

The war reflected re-centralizing trends that had grown since 2018. One sub-national executive (Interview 2023) said that regional leaders had little choice but to contribute (materially and ideologically) to the war effort. A former House of Federation member (Interview 2023) said that since the war, the national government has increasingly intervened in sub-national affairs, from education and health to the installation of military command posts. Many opposition elites connected the Tigray War to re-centralization and exclusion (Interview with Oromo Liberation Front spokesperson, 2023).[44] By contrast, many Ethiopianist and Amhara elites supported the war, including Abiy's closest advisors[45] and opponents.

The Tigray War served as a pretext for further autocratization. Press freedom declined, as journalists and academics who refused to publish the national government's war propaganda were imprisoned, exiled, and denounced as paid agents of Tigray (Harter 2022). The rule of law also declined while political imprisonment increased, as Tigrayans in Addis Ababa were placed in internment camps without trial (Endeshaw & Houreld 2022). And opposition party autonomy declined. The Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which lost its incumbency status during the war, was placed on the national government's list of terrorist organizations. Other Tigrayan and Oromo parties were targeted with greater intensity (BBC 2021a).

The Tigray War was Ethiopia's first (largely) civil war after 1991 and the implementation of autocratic ethnofederalism.[46] Although some have taken the war as an indictment of ethnofederalism (Ishiyama 2021), I take it as an indictment of factors that threaten ethnofederal survival, namely centralization and ethnic exclusion (McGarry & O'Leary 2009). To elaborate, the Tigray War seemingly challenged a key premise of ethnofederalism, namely that it helps prevent the escalation of ethnic conflict into civil war (Roeder 2009). Recall that ethnofederations are often

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[44]An Oromo opposition activist called the war "an extension of...war on Oromia...both wars were waged in an effort to consolidate power and eliminate pro federalism forces" (Bedhaso 2021).

[45]Abiy's advisor Berhanu Nega said "TPLF's belligerence, its inability to accept change and reform, and its hostility to Abiy were obvious to us for the past 2 years" (BBC 2020).

[46]Eritrea's involvement complicates an assessment of the war as merely civil.

implemented in countries wracked by civil war, like Ethiopia before 1991 (Anderson 2012). The goal is to afford ethnic groups territorial autonomy so that they abandon violence and secessionist projects.

To see why autocratic ethnofederalism should not be blamed for the Tigray War, a key analogue is Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav Wars were not an inevitable outcome of ethnofederalism. Indeed, no civil war had occurred in 45 years of ethnofederal Yugoslavia (1945-1990). Instead, the wars (and Yugoslavia's dissolution) were a consequence of Serbian elites' attempts to re-centralize power and create an exclusionary Serb nation (Grigoryan 2012). Similarly, in Ethiopia, AEF had succeeded in preventing civil war for 29 years. After 2018, Ethiopia was pushed to war by the national government's re-centralization and by perceptions that it was reconstructing an exclusionary Amhara nation.

The Ethiopian national military and Tigray sub-national forces agreed to a cessation of hostilities in November 2022. It is not clear that the agreement will hold. Much of this is due to Tigray's continued worries about re-centralization and exclusion. The war not only devastated Ethiopia's economy and security in the Horn of Africa. It also undermined Tigray's (and perhaps Oromia's) willingness to remain part of a multi-national, federated Ethiopia (Tronvoll 2022). An Oromo Liberation Front spokesperson (Interview 2023) said "During the war, we saw how adamantly Amharas celebrated crushing their Semitic[-language speaking], Orthodox Christian brothers [in Tigray]. We realized there was no hope for us [Cushitic-language speaking, largely Muslim Oromos]. If they [Amharas] can't live in a federation with Tigrayans, they certainly cannot with Oromos."

Chapter 6

Conclusion

This dissertation offered a new way for thinking about a large universe of countries, those that are autocratic ethnofederations (AEFs). AEFs are autocracies and formal federations where the state governments are ethnic homelands. Almost two billion people live in the five current AEFs: India, Pakistan, Russia, Ethiopia, and Malaysia. And the defunct AEFs were also quite populous, including the USSR, Yugoslavia, and Burma. AEFs have been prone to military coups, ethnic violence, and state collapse.

My overarching question was: When might AEFs undergo democratic transitions or fall prey to authoritarian backlash? AEF has been a conspicuous institution in several democratic transitions. Yet in other cases, AEF leaders have repressed their opponents and autocratized. Which institutional features of AEF can encourage democratization?

I began with the observation that many AEF regime changes could be understood as responses by autocrats to 'crises,' like mass protests or legislative gridlock. This is not the only way that AEFs have undergone regime changes. Indeed, some AEF democratizations were prompted by international pressure as opposed to crises. And some seeming crises have not prompted regime change. However, focusing on regime changes that followed crises can deepen our understanding of an important share of cases

My theoretical framework was stimulated by an analysis of the universe of AEF regime changes as well as the literature on ethnofederal collapse. Scholars have shown that when

ethnofederations are centralized and ethnically exclusive, dominant groups may try to terminate the federation while aggrieved groups may try to secede from it. These phenomena appeared similarly relevant for understanding of democratization and autocratization.

I theorized that different combinations of 'centralization' –the balance of powers between federal and state governments– and 'ethnic exclusion' –the balance of powers between ethnic elites within the federal government– affect how autocrats respond to crises. I argued that in centralized and exclusive AEFs, national government incumbents would try to resolve crises via authoritarian repression. This is because centralization strengthens the federal government and exclusion renders it ethnically unified and decisive. Meanwhile, I argued that in decentralized and inclusive AEFs, the repressive response would be "blocked." This is because decentralization weakens the federal government and inclusion creates inter-ethnic disagreement and indecision. As national incumbents are too weak and indecisive to respond, the crisis will tend to prolong and intensify. Ultimately, incumbents may be compelled to make democratic concessions.

I then provided data on the universe of AEFs, centralization and ethnic exclusion, regime changes, and crises. This enabled me to search for patterns that corroborated the theory. The analysis provided preliminary support for the theory. On the one hand, in 100% (4/4 cases) of the decentralized, inclusive AEFs that faced crises, incumbents democratized. This included important democratizations like those in the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. On the other hand, in 81% (13/16 cases) of the centralized, exclusive AEFs that faced crises, incumbents autocratized. This included significant autocratizations, like the 20th century military coups in Burma, Nigeria, and Pakistan.

Despite this preliminary support, more was needed to establish the plausibility of my theorized sequence. In other words, did different combinations of centralization and exclusion actually constrain or enable incumbents in their responses to crises? Could incumbents' responses be understood through a plausible chain of events and decisions?

Finally, I conducted three case studies of Ethiopia, an AEF that autocratized in 2005 and 2019 and partially democratized in 2018. These provided detailed support for each component

of the theoretical sequence. The case studies assessed the effect of each combination of factors, focusing on two autocratization episodes and one democratization episode.

In both 2005 and 2019, Ethiopian national incumbents responded to serious crises –mass protests, opposition electoral success, an attempted coup– with authoritarian repression. I argued that centralization and ethnic exclusion enabled these responses. And in 2018, mass protests dragged on for four years without a resolution, as national incumbents deployed an erratic mix of repression and inaction. Ultimately, the protest crisis was resolved through democratic concessions. I argued that over six years of decentralization and ethnic inclusion disabled national incumbents from resolving the crisis via repression.

The case studies were corroborated by original interview fieldwork with Ethiopian elites. I conducted 20 interviews with current and former politicians, opposition party leaders, and bureaucrats, among others. The interview data provided evidence that Ethiopian elite behavior was broadly consistent with the case study findings.

This dissertation can inform international democracy promotion both in Ethiopia and in other AEFs. I find that the combination of decentralization and ethnic inclusion may help encourage democratic transitions under AEF in the face of crises. By deepening the autonomy of state governments and including diverse ethnic elites in the federal government, democracy promoters may be able to create barriers to authoritarian backlash.

Ethiopian politics has been historically inhospitable to democracy. But democratic change may be possible if Ethiopia's political institutions are properly configured, as they were in the lead up to its 2018 liberalization. Although many politicians blame ethnofederalism for Ethiopia's woes, this dissertation is optimistic that Ethiopia can look to a democratic *and* ethnofederal future.

Scholars interested in autocracy and ethnofederalism could advance this research agenda in several ways. First, they could collect more fine-grained data on centralization and ethnic exclusion. I found the most prominent data sets to be geographically narrow or conceptually

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inadequate for my purposes. In some cases, data for entire countries was missing, more subtle trends were not accounted for, and de jure, constitutional analysis substituted for de facto, substantive analysis. By contrast, the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) data set enriched this project tremendously. V-Dem can serve as an exemplar for those interested in collecting fine-grained, AEF-relevant data. Such data could also make it easier to conduct quantitative tests using advanced statistical techniques.

Second, scholars could examine in detail whether centralization and ethnic exclusion help explain other AEF regime changes following crises. Of particular interest is Pakistan, whose two democratization episodes under centralized, exclusive conditions seemed to count as disconfirming cases in chapter 2. Ethiopia and Pakistan are similar on many dimensions: levels of poverty, inequality, and ethnic diversity; histories of irredentism in Ethiopia's Somali state and Pakistan's Balochistan province; and the privileged status of Amharic and Orthodox Christianity in Ethiopia and Urdu and Sunni Islam in Pakistan. The chapter 2 theory's plausibility would be greatly improved if it could help explain Pakistan's regular descent into military autocracy and then semi-free civilian rule. I suggested that Pakistan's democratization episodes could be explained by military leaders' confidence in holding elections that did not threaten their power. However, scholars of Pakistan could provide more evidence for or against this suggestion.

Another AEF of interest is Russia, where the Russo-Ukraine war has been accompanied by domestic autocratization. Which institutional conditions have enabled Putin's backlash? Following the chapter 2 theory, perhaps these are related to Moscow's central control over the Republics as well as the exclusionary dominance of Russians.

Third, scholars could broaden my focus from AEFs to include democratic ethnofeder-ations. Of particular interest is India. Despite its brief periods of autocracy, India has mostly been a democratic ethnofederation. Can centralization, ethnic exclusion, and crises help explain India's democratic backsliding? Two important cases are the beginning of Indira Gandhi's Emergency Rule in 1975 and the Bharatiya Janata Party's 2017 autocratization. These were not counted as cases in chapter 2. This is because I focused on regime changes in autocratic

ethnofederations, not democratic ethnofederations. Indira's Emergency seems to exemplify my theorized sequence. Mass protests and assassinations of public figures created a crisis for Indira's national government, to which it responded with authoritarian repression. Centralization and ethnic exclusion ostensibly enabled this response. Although this account seems plausible, scholars of India could provide more evidence for or against it.

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